

The Conceptualization and Sustainability of Rotenese Gong Music

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Abstract

This dissertation presents an ethnomusicological study of Rotenese gong (*meko*), particularly in relation to the conceptualization and the sustainability of this musical instrument ensemble in Rote, Indonesia. Ethnographic research was conducted in the island of Rote in East Nusa Tenggara Province from January 2015 to February 2016 to answer two primary research questions:

- 1) How are Rotenese gong (*meko*) music and playing conceptualized by the Rotenese people; and
- 2) How are Rotenese gong music and playing sustained by the Rotenese people.

Data was collected through participant-observation, in-depth interviews, personal communication, and video recording. Data was analyzed using a thematic approach. Differences in information given by research participants were compared and contrasted one to another, as well as with existing literature. The Rotenese dyadic and triadic concepts of James J. Fox, which underpin the Rotenese organization of their world, are drawn upon to study the *meko*. These concepts are applicable to understand how the Rotenese people conceptualize their *meko*, especially in relation to the arrangement and the playing of the gongs.

Although the *meko besik* (iron gongs) and the *meko lilok* (brass gongs) were originally not from the island of Rote, they have become the symbol of Rotenese identity. In comparison to the *sasandu*, a Rotenese heterochord tube zither, *meko* has much significance in local culture for two main reasons: 1) the name “*meko*” refers to the primary function of this instrument, that is, “to call people to gather;” and 2) *meko* playing represents the collectivistic character of the Rotenese agricultural society. The use of interlocking techniques represents the “importance of debt as a determinant of social obligation;” and “the rice pounding rhythm” is clearly captured in the playing of the *meko ana*.

The belief among the Rotenese people that *meko* playing in the eastern part of Rote differs from their counterpart in the western parts of Rote, is not proven. My research shows more similarities (e.g., the rhythms, the order of gongs played, and the tempo) rather than differences. If we notice differences between these four *meko* ensembles (i.e., Oenitas Village, Temas Village, *Nusa Tua Meni* Music and Dance Studio, and Eahun *Kampong*), it is primarily because of their different tunings. Musical geography between the eastern and the western parts of Rote is drawn to emphasize the geographical and socio-cultural boundaries between these two territories. The emergence of a new genre, known as *Seni Kreasi Baru (SKB)*, can be perceived as an effort made by local musicians and artists to sustain the future of *meko* music and playing; as an attempt to make it more relevant to the modern world.

Declaration

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled *The Conceptualization and Sustainability of Rotenese Gong Music* submitted for the partial fulfilment of my PhD degree is my original work. This work has not been submitted to any other institution for the full or partial fulfilment of any degree. To the best of my knowledge the works of other authors and the information given by my research participants included in this dissertation have been acknowledged.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved family, my wife Natalis Sidanta, and daughter Reina Sabia Listya who just turned to 17, as well my mother Nicolien Wiryatnaya, and my parents in law Eka Mara Sidanta and Elkana Sidanta; to my only brother, Aditya Rama Mitra; to all of my research participants; to the family of Sula; to Satya Wacana Christian University; to my supervisors, and those known to us by name.

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Glossary

<i>Aididipo or ndikodon</i>	: tuning pegs of the <i>sasandu</i>
<i>Ba'i</i>	: old man
<i>Bamba bau ro</i>	: <i>labu</i> 's drumhead made of bats kins
<i>Bini, Fini</i>	: an abstraction of conventional wisdom which comprises of dyadic sets. For instance, <i>ina</i> (woman/wife) with <i>tou</i> (man/husband), <i>feto</i> (sister) with <i>na</i> (brother)
<i>Bitala or Krintingan</i>	: crash cymbals
<i>Dea</i>	: outside
<i>Dae, lain</i>	: below
<i>“Dae Bafok do Batu Poi”</i>	: the ritual name for earth
<i>Dale</i>	: inside
<i>Dua, lua or rua</i>	: two
<i>Dulu</i>	: the East or right
<i>Engge nggeok</i>	: lead
<i>Esa</i>	: one
<i>Falu</i>	: eight
<i>Fetor</i>	: vice king
<i>Fula</i>	: white
<i>Ha</i>	: four
<i>Haik</i>	: a liquid container made of palmyra palm leaves. It serves as resonator for the <i>sasandu</i>
<i>Hako</i>	: a wooden frame for wooden xylophone
<i>Iko or mea</i>	: tail
<i>Ina lai</i>	: queen
<i>“Jam Karet”</i>	: “a relaxed and flexible attitude about time”
<i>Juk</i>	: the earliest form of the <i>sasandu</i> with three strings
<i>Kapisak</i>	: lontar leaves
<i>Kebalai</i>	: Rotenese circle dance
<i>Ki</i>	: the North
<i>Kianuk</i>	: two-holed bamboo flute
<i>Koan</i>	: a flower-like crown attached to the top of <i>haik</i>
<i>Kokolak</i>	: ordinary conversation
<i>Kona</i>	: South

<i>Li</i>	: a piece of gong music and dance
<i>Lilo fulak</i>	: white gold
<i>Lilo pilas</i>	: gold
<i>Liti</i>	: copper
<i>Laik, ata'</i>	: above
<i>“Lain do Poin”</i>	: “the ritual name for heaven”
<i>Labu aik</i>	: wooden sticks used for <i>tambur</i> and <i>labu kici</i>
<i>Labu kici or labu so'e</i>	: single headed, bowl-shaped drum played with double sticks
<i>Lamatuak Lain</i>	: the great Man who owns Heaven
<i>Langga</i>	: the head
<i>Lau inggu</i>	: commoners
<i>Ledo</i>	: the Sun
<i>Lima malelak</i>	: right hand or the “knowing hand”
<i>Li mukuk</i>	: muted sound
<i>Li naruk</i>	: open sound
<i>Lima nggoa</i>	: left hand or the “ignorant hand”
<i>Manahelo</i>	: Rotenese traditional chanter
<i>Manaleo</i>	: tribal chief
<i>Manasonggo</i>	: intercessor
<i>Manek</i>	: king
<i>Mane Tua Lain</i>	: the great Man who owns Heaven
<i>Meko, me'o</i>	: Rotenese gong. It comprises two words: “ <i>me</i> ” (“to call”) and “ <i>ko</i> ” (“people”)
<i>Meko ai or meko o</i>	: wooden or bamboo xylophone
<i>Meko ana</i>	: a pair of the smallest gongs in a gong set
<i>Meko ina, mai</i>	: three pieces of the largest gongs in a gong set
<i>Meko besik</i>	: hanging metal gongs or metallophone
<i>Meko lalanggak esa</i>	: a gong set
<i>Meko leko</i>	: a pair of the second smallest gongs in a gong set
<i>Meko paiseli</i>	: known as <i>meko leko dae</i>
<i>Meko nggasa</i>	: a pair of the second largest gongs in a gong set
<i>Modo</i>	: yellow
<i>Muli</i>	: West or left
<i>Ne</i>	: six
<i>Nes do Linok</i>	: the inhabited and quiet island

<i>Nggeo</i>	: black
<i>Noessa Dahena</i>	: the island of man
<i>Nusak</i>	: self-ruling domain
<i>Pelog</i>	: the tuning system of Javanese <i>gamelan</i> with seven uneven intervals to the octave
<i>Pilas</i>	: red
<i>Pitu</i>	: seven
<i>Pule/Mbulek sio</i>	: nine seeds
<i>Rote do Kale</i>	: the uncle Rote and his nephew Kale
<i>Sai boak</i>	: <i>lontar</i> fruit
<i>Sandu or sanu</i>	: to vibrate
<i>Sasandu</i>	: heterochord tube zither
<i>Sasandu Biola or sasando</i>	: diatonic, heterochord tube zither
<i>Sasandu Gong</i>	: pentatonic, heterochord tube zither
<i>Sandu milak</i>	: the tube of the <i>sasandu</i>
<i>Senda</i>	: a movable wooden bridge on the surface of the <i>aon</i> . It functions as another <i>sasandu</i> 's tuner
<i>Seni Kreasi Baru (SKB)</i>	: new arts genre
<i>Sio</i>	: nine
<i>Slendro</i>	: the tuning system of Javanese <i>gamelan</i> with five roughly equidistant intervals to the octave
<i>Sodak</i>	: a song
<i>Sopi</i>	: locally made liquor
<i>Tambur</i>	: a single-headed, long cylindrical drum played with two sticks
<i>Telu</i>	: three
<i>Temukung</i>	: the head of a subvillage
<i>Tifa</i>	: a single-headed, cylindrical drum played with a pair of drum sticks
<i>Toto Buang</i>	: diatonic Moluccan traditional gongs

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Two Noticeable Issues on *Meko* Music

During the pre-fieldwork period, my knowledge about Rote (refer to 1.3. *Terminology* and 1.4. *The Geography of Rote*) and Rotenese traditional music instruments (refer to Chapter 4 *Classifying Rotenese Musical Instruments*), especially gong (*meko*), was minimal. One primary reason for this was the lack of availability of publications regarding *meko*. Most of the publications available (e.g., Ndaumanu 1975; Kartomi 1984; Silab, Bessie, and Idam 1994; Silab 1992; Theedens 1989, 1990; 1996, 2009a; 2009b; 2011, 2013; Haning 2015e; Francis 2017) focus on the *sasandu* (a Rotenese heterochord tube-zither instrument with a resonator made of *lontar*¹ leaves), whereas the *meko* is briefly discussed in few sources (Haning 2009e; Basile 1998b, 2001, 2003; Sine 2012; Adoe 2013).

This lack of information on Rotenese culture and music affected my confidence conducting this research. At the beginning of my research about Rote, I remained unsure about what I was specifically looking for. The answer to my question came soon after. Two issues I encountered in the first two months of my research shaped a clear direction of my research goals, especially in clarifying my research questions: 1) the musical geography between the eastern and the western parts of Rote; and 2) the sustainability of Rotenese gong music. These two issues will be described briefly below.

1.1.1. The First Issue

I landed at D.C. Saudale Airport, Lekunik, Rote in the late afternoon on January 29, 2015. Ernest Sula, my host for the next thirteen months, had been waiting for me on the airport

¹ *Sundaicus Boraicus*

veranda. He turned out to be a friendly and humorous figure. While conversing with Sula, I had a pivotal encounter with Adolf Hilly, who was the former head of Lidor Village. Sula introduced me to Hilly as a researcher from Satya Wacana Christian University in Salatiga, Indonesia who would study the *meko* for a year in Rote. Hilly showed his enthusiasm soon as he heard about my research topic. He came close to me saying, “*Meko* music and playing from the western part of Rote is more dynamic in character than that of the East. Dynamic is associated with fast tempo and loud volume (2015).” What had been said by Hilly was corroborated by Insan Saudale, Lens Haning and Johanis Feoh.

Hilly’s statement kept resonating in my mind throughout my research. The issue of musical geography between the East and the West had led me to study: 1) how gong music is conceptualized by the Rotenese; and 2) how gong music is used to emphasize the “musical differences” between the eastern and western parts of Rote.

1.1.2. The Second Issue

The issue of the sustainability of *meko* music is inspired by three closely-related interviews. Johanis Feoh (2015) described the distribution of *meko* across the island; Reinert Eduart Therik (2015) and Pieter Sjoen (2015), from East Rote, and Esau Nalle (2015a) from West Rote, all referred to the influence and impact of pop music on Rotenese traditional music; and finally, Frans Lau (2015) expressed his concern about the potential loss of *meko* and its impact on the Rotenese national character.

Feoh (2015), the head of the subdistrict of Northwest Rote, stated that *meko* playing in Rote has decreased roughly to forty percent in the last two decades. Ninety percent out of forty percent is dominated by the subdistricts of East Rote, Northwest Rote and Southwest Rote, while

the other ten percent is shared between the subdistricts of Ndao-Nuse, West Rote, Lobalain, Central Rote, South Rote and Landu Leko.

Therik (2015), Sjioen (2015) and Esau Nalle (2015a), all argued that the enthusiasm of the younger Rotenese generation to learn *meko* playing has been declining due to the massive influence of pop music. Being disseminated through mobile phones, radios and audio players; pop music has become a magnet to the youth and driven them away from *meko* music and playing. According to Therik (2015), this is especially true with the young Rotenese who study outside Rote.

Lau, a former member of House of Representatives in Kupang Regent and a *maneleo* (tribal chief) of the Lulu tribe, expressed his concern about the future of *meko* music and playing in Rote. According to Lau (2015), the loss of *meko* playing in the future would potentially affect the gentle character of the Rotenese people. Lau is convinced that the gentle manner of the Rotenese people is the result of their participation in *meko* playing.

A concern about the future of Rotenese *meko* playing as expressed by some of my research participants brought me to study the sustainability of *meko* music and playing in Rote. In my research, I investigated factors that affect the sustainability of *meko* music and playing, and at the same time looked at how *meko* music and playing have been adjusting to the contemporary context.

1.2. Background to the Research

Based on these two issues, two research questions were formulated: 1) How are *meko*, and *meko* music and playing conceptualized by Rotenese people? And 2) how are *meko* music and playing sustained by Rotenese people? Since there has been no significant research conducted on the *meko*, this research is intended to fill in the gap. Christopher Basile, a Monash scholar who

conducted research on the *sasandu* in Rote from 1992 to 1997, also includes the *meko* in his dissertation. The *meko* is discussed because of its connection with the *sasandu*; they both share the same tuning and music repertoire. The discussion of the *meko* in Basile's dissertation is perhaps the first detailed writing of the ensemble, terminology and how it is played, but it does not go deeper into the underpinning philosophy of dyad and triad.

1.3. Terminology

Throughout this dissertation, I will use four key terms: 1) Rote, 2) *meko*, 3) tradition, and 4) community, and it is essentially important to explain these terms in advance.

There are several names for the island of Rote, for instance, *Nes Do Linok* (meaning “an inhabited and quiet island”) and *Rote do Kale* (meaning “the uncle Rote Nes and his nephew, Kale Lino”) (Haning 2015b, 13). In the early Dutch maps, this island was written as “Rotthe,” but then was miscopied by the later cartographers as “Rotto” (Fox 1977a, 11). *Noessa Dahena* (meaning the “Island of Man”) was a name used in an early seventeenth-century map (Fox 1977a, 11). By the mid-seventeenth-century, in the archives of the Dutch East India Company, Rote had three variant spellings: “Rotti,” “Rotty” and “Rottij” (Fox 1977a, 11). The Rotenese people insist that the name “Rotes” as found in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Portuguese documents is the correct name for the island. The word “Roti,” meaning “bread,” is a Malay corruption of the word “Rote” (Fox 1977a, 11).

The Rotenese call the island *Nusa Lote*. The difficulty found in some Rotenese dialects in pronouncing the consonant “r” has resulted in the change of the word “Rote” to become “Lote” (Ballo 2004, 43-44). I choose the word “Rote” instead of “Roti” throughout this dissertation because this is the word used both by the Rotenese and other Indonesians.

The word *meko* was previously used to refer to a wooden/bamboo xylophone; later it was adopted to name a set of imported metal gongs consisting of nine small to medium pieces (Basile 2003, 54). According to Chornelis Tuy (2015) the word *meko* can be broken down into two words: *me* (to call) and *ko* (people). As a compound word, *meko* means “to call people to gather” (refer to subsection 6.4.2. *The Etymology of the Meko*).

The word “tradition” or “traditional music” is used in this dissertation because the term is commonly used by Indonesian musicians, scholars and government officials to refer to any local musical genres that have been handed down through generations orally. Indonesians differentiate traditional/ethnic music from Western music (e.g., classical, jazz and pop music).

I acknowledge that the word “tradition” itself is problematic. First, it assumes that “musical tradition” only belongs to non-literate societies. Music is transmitted from one to the next generation orally. In fact, the word “tradition” can include any other genres of music, including classical and jazz music which are considered as having come from literate societies. Second, it assumes that “musical tradition” is fairly static (unchangeable) over time. However, each traditional music is “the outcome of dynamic and historical changes; each generation of musicians and listeners takes the music traditions of the past, adds its own stamp in the present, and passes it on to the future” (Spiller 2010, 205). The music that we see and hear as “traditional” is in fact a product of generations of change.

David Coplan (1990, 40) defines tradition as “dependent upon a symbolically constituted past whose horizons extend into the present.” Coplan’s definition describes tradition as a legacy from the past which is transmitted to the present. It carries cultural symbols from the past, yet at the same time is adjusting to the present context. Tradition as a cultural symbol is always changing to suit its new context.

I observe that the understanding of traditional music as a relatively stable and unchanging art in Rote has led to resistance toward “*Seni Kreasi Baru*” (new arts genre).² Although “*Seni Kreasi Baru*” (*SKB*) retains some traditional elements, some Rotenese traditional musicians do not consider it to be “Rotenese.” To borrow Joseph Pieper’s (1957, 152) notion of tradition, *SKB* does not have a quality of Rotenese traditional music and dance genre because it is not authentic. Mauly Purba’s (2007, 2) definition of the elements of traditional music, such as the repertoire, structure, idioms, instrumentation and style being purely sourced from the ethnic group where the music belongs, seems to represent the view of a majority of Indonesian traditional musicians who think that traditional music should be free from any influence outside that ethnic group.

In response to Sebastian’s reluctance to move on from the traditional to more contemporary jazz, Keith (a revolutionist) criticizes Sebastian’s (a traditionalist) attitude as follows:

Keith : I know it’s different....you say, you want to save jazz...how do you want to save jazz if no one is listening?
Jazz is dying because of people like you. You are playing the ninety road at the Lighthouse. Where’s the kids, where’s the young people?
You are so obsessed with Kenny Clark, Thelonious Monk. These guys were revolutionaries. How are you going to be a revolutionary if you’re such a traditionalist? You’re holding onto the past, but jazz is about the future...(a quote from the *La La Land* movie).

Sebastian represents the traditionalists, while Keith represents the revolutionist. Sebastian wants to preserve jazz as it was, whereas Keith is more open to adjusting to the contemporary demand. Sebastian and Keith might better exemplify the tension between the traditionalists and the revolutionists in Rote.

² Recently, a new musical and dance genre that retains the traditional elements of the Rotenese music and dance, and at the same time incorporates some new elements from outside Rote. More information about this genre is discussed in subtopic 8.2.4.4 *Music and Dance Workshops for Studio Managers*.

To some degree, *SKB* shows similarity to what is called “invented tradition”³ (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2012). The only difference is that *SKB* is not invented, constructed and institutionalized, rather it is “modified.” It appears as a response to current situations but with references to the past.

Finally, I adopt Anthony P. Cohen’s (2013, 19) definition on “community:”

“It is an arena in which its members acquire the most fundamental and substantial experience of social life outside the confines of the home. In it they learn the meaning of kinship through being able to perceive its boundaries—that is, by juxtaposing it to non-kinship; they learn ‘friendship;’ they acquire the sentiments of close social association and the capacity to express or otherwise manage these in their social relationships.”

The construction of boundaries becomes the basis of Cohen’s definition of community; through these symbolic boundaries communities differentiate one from another. The Rotenese people distinguish themselves from other communities through *meko* and *sasandu* playing.

In the next section, I will describe the island of Rote as the site of my research. A short description of the island will help readers imagine Rote’s geography, including its temperature, seasons and the date of birth.

1.4. The Geography of Rote

Rote-Ndao Regency is situated in southernmost Indonesia and claimed as the closest Indonesian area to North Australia. It is bordered by the Savu Sea in the North, the Hindia Ocean in the South, the Savu Sea in the West and the Timor Sea in the East. The Rote-Ndao Regency was formerly part of Kupang Regency, but on March 11, 2002 it was officially declared by the

³ The term is to mean “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2012, 1). This term includes invented, constructed and formally instituted traditions.

House of Representatives as a new regency within the East Nusa Tenggara Province administration.

According to data issued by the Rote Ndao Statistics Department (2014, 4), there are 107 islands in the Rote Ndao Regency altogether, but only 7 islands are inhabited (i.e., Rote, Usu, Ndana, Ndao, Landu, Nuse, and Do'o). Rote, with an area covering around 97,854 hectares is considered the largest island, whereas Do'o as only occupies 192 hectares becomes the smallest island.

Geographically, the island of Rote⁴ is a combination of hilly (32 hectares) and flat land (45 hectares) with a declivity level of around 45 degrees. Its temperature is very humid (85 percent); the dry season can be very hot. Being located in tropical region, Rote has two seasons: dry and wet. The rainy season lasts only from December to April (three to four months), while the dry season is longer in period of time (May to November). The planting season usually starts in December and ends in February, while the harvest season usually takes place in April to June. Storms always happen during the transitions from dry to rainy seasons and vice versa. The strong wind popularly known as a tropical cyclone is dangerous for any sea transport to and from the island, in particular through the Strait of Pukuafu.

1.5. Limitations

As my ethnomusicological study of Rotenese gong attempts to answer two big research questions (i.e., how gong music is conceptualized by the Rotenese, and how gong music is sustained by the Rotenese), the musicians were the focus of this research. Key subquestions include: how do Rotenese musicians⁵ perceive their *meko* music? How do their perceptions about

⁴ I am talking about the largest island.

⁵ The term 'musician' refers to anyone who makes music or composes music.

meko relate to their playing? What do they think about the future of their *meko* music? What has been done by the community and the government to sustain *meko* music?

Topics such as the composing and the history of new gong music pieces (*li*) (e.g., *Li Benta Taon*, *Li Koa Dau-dau*, *Li Dede Kode*, *Li Foa Balaha* and *Li Toru Matetun*), new gong music pieces as a vehicle for criticism, and ornamentation in *meko* music and playing, are not discussed in this dissertation because I focus my research only on the conceptualization and the sustainability of *meko* music and playing in Rote. These limitations create opportunities for future ethnomusicological research on Rotenese gong music.

1.6. Dissertation Structure

The structuring of this dissertation into nine chapters loosely follows the number of gongs in a *meko lalanggak esa* (a *meko* set). For example, the first three chapters of my dissertation (i.e., Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology) mirror the first three largest gongs (*meko ina*). Like the vital function played by the *meko ina* in *meko lalanggak esa*, the Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology are the foundation of my whole dissertation.

Chapter One provides a general description of this dissertation. It serves as an entrance to understand the background of this research, a brief definition of some key terms used in this dissertation (i.e., Rote, *meko*, tradition, and community), the geography of the island, the limitations and the structure of this dissertation. In this chapter, readers are informed how two issues found at the outset led to the research questions.

Chapter Two discusses seven existing publications (i.e., Myers 1993; Basile 1998b, 2001, 2003; Soh 2008a; Haning 2009e; Sine 2012) that include information relevant to the *meko*, and one substantial piece of writing by James J. Fox (1968), which covers the dualistic principle of male and female as found in the Rotenese ritual language (*bini*) (for more information about *bini*,

refer to subsection 2.3.9. Fox, James J. 1968. “*The Rotenese: A Study of the Social Organization of an Eastern Indonesian People.*” PhD diss., University of Oxford). The dyadic system of complementarity and superiority, which underpins the Rotenese organization of their world, is drawn on to understand the structure and playing of *meko*.

Chapter Three describes how this research on Rotenese gongs was conducted. Three phases of ethnomusicological fieldwork (i.e., pre-fieldwork, fieldwork and post-fieldwork) are included in this chapter to help readers to follow the entire research process (especially, from the preparation to the writing up) and to describe how some plans had to change to adjust to the field context, primarily in relation to cultural issues that arose.

Chapter Four classifies Rotenese musical instruments using the Hornbostel-Sachs (H-S) Classification System. The seven Rotenese musical instruments (i.e., the *meko ai* or the *meko o* [the wooden or bamboo xylophone], the *meko besik* [the hanging iron gongs], the *meko besik* [the iron metallophone], the *labu kici* or the *labu so’e* [the single-headed, bowl-shaped drum], the *tambur* or the *labu* [the single-headed, long cylindrical drum]; the *bitala* [the crash cymbals]; and the *sasandu* [the heterochord tube-zither] are analyzed based on their physical details (i.e., the construction, materials, ways of playing and the size). The H-S system is adopted because: 1) it is a widely-used Western classification system; and 2) the use of the Dewey Decimal System helps readers to follow the structure of musical instruments clearly and easily.

Chapter Five suggests an insider understanding of Rotenese musical instruments. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the socio-cultural details of the *sasandu* and *meko* in relation to Rotenese understanding of dualism. The second section is a constructed Rotenese classification system of musical instruments, which is examined through two elements: the significance and functions of the *sasandu* and *meko* for the Rotenese. In this

chapter, I argue that the significance of the *meko* as a symbol of Rotenese identity does not reside in its physical appearance, but rather in its function to nurture the spirit of collectivism, which is also embedded through its name.

Chapter Six constructs the history of the *sasandu* and *meko* based on narratives presented by my research participants. Each narrative is compared, contrasted and cross-checked with one another as well as with existing publications. In this chapter, I argue that a great diversity in narratives enriches rather than confuses the reconstructed history of the *meko*.

Chapter Seven examines the issue of musical geography between the western and the eastern parts of Rote. The musical transcriptions of four *meko* ensembles' (representing these two territories) recordings of *li Kakamusu*, *li Mudipapa* and *li Tai Benu* are compared through musical analysis. In this chapter, I argue that the geography of music between the eastern and the western parts of Rote has been reconstructed to emphasize the geographical and socio-cultural boundaries between these two territories.

Chapter Eight discusses the transmission and sustainability of Rotenese gong music in Rote. *SKB* emerges as an attempt to connect the historical *meko* to contemporary contexts and demands. *SKB* can be understood as one attempt to sustain the future of Rotenese gong music.

Chapter Nine provides answers to the research questions. In this chapter, I argue that the concepts of dyad and triad are prerequisites to understanding the structure and the playing of *meko*.

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Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the existing and the accessible literature on Rotenese gongs. What has been written on *meko* music is fundamental to building my knowledge on Rotenese culture and music, in particular the *meko* and the *sasandu*. A PhD dissertation on the concepts of dyad and triad by James J. Fox (1968), an anthropologist from the Australian National University, is crucial to my research. The dyadic and triadic concepts which are common among the peoples of East Nusa Tenggara including the Rotenese, helped me to understand how the Rotenese conceptualize their musical instruments.

The works of Myers (1993), Basile (1998b, 2001, 2003),⁶ Soh (2008a), Haning (2009e), Sine (2012) and Adoe (2013) all discuss the Rotenese *meko* at various depths. These works are vital to my research, particularly in relation to the analysis of data. The data I collected from my research participants and information I observed from the field are compared and contrasted with these writings. Each writing was discussed with reference to the following questions: what topic was covered by this writing? How relevant was it to my research? How was data collected and presented? How does information presented in this literature corresponded with the recent *meko* music on Rote? What things have and have not changed?

In order to help readers follow how research on *meko* music has evolved from time to time, the discussion of these writings is presented chronologically according to the date of publication.

⁶ The 1998 and 2001 publications are sourced from Basile's doctoral dissertation. Compared to the 1998 publication the information presented in the 2001 article was limited.

2.2. Limitations

In locating secondary sources regarding *meko* music, I experienced two difficulties. First, writings on Rotenese music, particularly the *meko*, were very rare. This showed the lack of popularity of the *meko* compared to the Javanese and Balinese gamelans. The available writings on Rotenese music mostly focused on the *sasandu* or the *sasando* (an extension of the *sasandu* with twenty-two to thirty-nine strings, tuned diatonically). Two possible arguments for this are: 1) Rotenese gong music is relatively almost unknown to the international world and even to most Indonesians; 2) prior to 2015 access to the island was challenging.

Second, writings on *meko* music by the Rotenese or Indonesian authors are relatively new; they were all written after 2000. Whereas the works written before 2000 were exclusively about the *sasandu*, for example books written by Ch. F. Ndaumanu (1975; 1979), Wilfridus Silab (1992), and Djony L.K. Theedens (1989; 1994, 1996). There has been a notable increase in writings on *meko* music especially from 2000 onwards, for example, Christopher Basile (2001, 2003), Andreas Z. Soh (2008a), Paul Anselmus Haning (2009e), Djony L.K. Theedens (2009a; 2009b; 2011, 2013) and Yandri Y.I. Sine (2012).

Unfortunately, two notable Western ethnomusicologists who are well known for their research in Indonesia, namely, Jaap Kunst and Margaret Kartomi, contributed very little to Rotenese music research. Kunst (1994), considered the first Western scholar to have written about Indonesian music, only discusses the *sesando* in less than a page of his book *Indonesian Music and Dance: Traditional Music and Its Interaction with the West*. Kartomi (1985), an ethnomusicologist from the University of Monash, Australia specializing in Indonesian traditional music, discusses the *sasando* on one third of a page of her introductory handbook to Indonesian musical instruments.

Fox, who began researching in 1965 and has been publishing dozens of writings on Rote since then, has written nothing concerning Rotenese music and musical instruments. His writings cover a wide variety of topics, including the Rotenese philosophy and social organization and systems (e.g., 1968, 1989), ecology (e.g., 1977a, 1979), genealogy (e.g., 1997, 2013), theology (e.g., 1983), and textiles (e.g., 1977b, 1980). Although Fox's publications cover almost all aspects of the Rotenese people, his focus is on the Rotenese chanted poems (*bini*), which are characterized by the use of pairing words (i.e., the dyadic system) (1971, 1972, 1974; 1975; 1988, 2006, 2016). For the sake of my research, I only discuss Fox's dissertation, primarily on the concepts of dyad and triad which are relevant to my research.

In discussing these writings, I will begin with the works of Myers, Basile, Soh, Haning, Sine and Adoe. Later, it will be closed by the work of Fox on dyadic and triadic concepts.

2.3. Evaluating the Sources

2.3.1. Myers, Douglas. 1993. "Outside Influences on the Music of Nusa Tenggara Timur." *In Culture and Society in New Order Indonesia*, edited by Virginia Matheson Hooker, 211-242. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

This chapter was published in a book titled *Culture and Society in New Order Indonesia* (1993) and edited by Virginia Matheson Hooker. In general, this book discusses the Indonesian society during the New Order (under the regime of Suharto, the second President of the Indonesian Republic), and how performing arts developed and responded to such a situation. Myers discusses: 1) the number of gongs in a *meko lalanggak esa*; 2) the number of gong music pieces; 3) the place of origin of gongs; 4) the tradition of gong making; 5) the correspondence between the *meko* and the *sasandu*; and 6) the locations of performances.

It is unclear how Myers collected his information. Did he manage to visit the island and to have some interviews with some key research participants? Or did he gather the information

from key individuals living outside Rote? It is likely that the research was conducted from outside Rote. Three arguments to support this assertion: 1) Myers writes that the number of *meko* music pieces in Rote are five; 2) Myers argues that there was no gong maker in Rote; and 3) Myers uses the term gong rather than “*meko*.”

Myers indicates: 1) there are only five pieces of gong music for Rotenese gong ensembles; and 2) the tradition of gong making in Rote is absent. In fact, there are more than thirty pieces of *meko* music (Haning 2009e, 49-70; Mesah 2015; Nalle 2015a). During my fieldwork, I catalogued more than forty pieces of *meko* music from across Rote, including new music pieces, for instance: *Enggalutu* (a sort of sea plant), *Sarlin Lendo-lendo* (a meeting between a man and a woman), *Koa Dao-dao* (a name of a bird which has very loud sound), *Toru Matetun* (to plane the wood) and *Deidei Kode* (a naughty monkey) composed by Samuel Zadrakh Bokotei (formerly the head of the subdistrict East Rote); *Lakamola Anan Sio* (Lakamola Hill which has nine children), *Natane Ina* (to propose to a girl) and *Nasu Tua* (to cook palm sugar) composed by Susana Lusi-Nggebu; and *Medak* (to surprise somebody) composed by Esau Nalle. New pieces by Bokotei had been written between the middle of the 1960s to the middle of the 1970s (Bokotei 2016), which was long time before Myers’ publication.

In response to Myers’ argument on the absence of gong making in Rote, in fact the tradition of iron gong-making has existed in *nusak* (self-ruling domains) Dengka since the time of Koutjie Ledoh (the beginning of twentieth century), the grandfather of Herman Ledoh, an iron gong maker from Busalangga Urban Village, the subdistrict of Northwest Rote. The raw material for iron gong making was readily available in Rote, so Myers could be correct if he was referring to the tradition of bronze gong making (e.g., as in Java and Bali). The raw material for bronze gong making is not available on Rote, and bronze gongs have been assumed to have been

brought into the island possibly either by Javanese, Makassarese or Arab traders in 1730 (refer to subsection 6.7.2 *Discussion on the Origins of the Bronze Gong, Meko Lilok and Meko Besik*).

Finally, the use of the term “gongs” rather than “meko” throughout his writing could assume: 1) Myers is probably not familiar with the local term for Rotenese gongs (i.e., “meko” or “me’o”); or 2) Myers wants to keep the term “gong” which is familiar to broader readers.

Myers approaches the subject from the outsider’s (etic) perspective. The similarities and differences between musical instruments and dances from East Nusa Tenggara and from outside these areas are compared and contrasted. In his attempt to show outside influences on East Nusa Tenggara musical instruments and dances, for example, he associates the Balinese *guntang* (a one-stringed bamboo idiochord with a long and narrow hole located underneath the raised string) with the origin of Rotenese *sasando*.⁷ In short, Myers argues that the heterochord *sasandu* previously was an idiochord.

2.3.2. Basile, Christopher. 1998. “Music Cultures and Regions: Roti.” In *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 4: Southeast Asia*, edited by Wim van Zanten, Terry Miller and Sean Williams, 798-801. New York: Routledge.

As a result of undertaking a long period of research in Rote (1992–1997), Basile published a series of writings on Rotenese musical instruments, in particular, the *sasandu* (1996, 1998b, 2001). In this literature review, the last two of Basile’s publications will be discussed because they both include some discussion on the *meko*.

⁷ The use of the term “*sasando*” implies that Myers collected his information from some research participants who live outside the island. The word “*sasando*” is unintelligible to the Rotenese. According to Haning (Haning 2009e, 12), the word *sasando* was adopted from a name of a hotel in Kupang.

Basile's article in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* presents the following topics: 1) connections between the *meko* and the *sasandu*; 2) the origin and the types of *meko*; and 3) the structure of *meko*.

In discussing *meko* playing, there are two important points to consider: 1) muted and unmuted playing; and 2) the pairing of gongs. In regard with muted and unmuted playing, Basile mentions four gongs to be played muted: 1) the *meko ina makamu*; 2) the *meko nggasa dae*; 3) the *meko leko dae* and 4) the *meko ana dae*. In contrast to Basile, my research shows that only two *meko* are to be played muted: the *meko ina taladak* and the *meko nggasa laik*. If there is another gong to be played muted, it would be the *meko leko dae*. The muted *meko leko dae* is obvious only in the recording of *Li Tai Benu*, which I studied in Teras Village, the subdistrict of Northwest Rote and not in the recordings of other *Li*⁸ (e.g., *Li Te'o Renda*, *Li Ndao* and *Kaka Filandak*). The terms *li mukuk* for "muted sound" and *li naruk* for "open sound" which are mentioned by Basile in this publication are not acknowledged by my research participants. I am not sure why, how, and when these two important terms, popular in the times of Basile's research, have disappeared from the Rotenese music vocabulary.

With regard to *meko* pairing, only *meko ina*, *meko nggasa* and *meko leko* are played by one performer, whereas *meko ana* are divided among two performers (Basile 1998b, 800). Again, based on my ethnographic observation on Rote, the *meko ana laik* and *daek* are usually played by one performer, whereas the *meko leko* is divided among two performers (e.g., *Li Te'o Tonak*, *Li Mudipapa* and *Batu Matia*). The differences between Basile and my research findings create a research gap. If we are both correct, then there has been a significant change from the time of

⁸ Literally, *li* means "sound." According to Rotenese concept of sound, music is considered as part of sound (Pellando'u 2015).

Basile to the time of my fieldwork on Rote. The questions to answer, therefore, are: when, why and how did these changes happen?

Basile's observation on disagreement among Rotenese musicians on whether the *sasandu* precedes the *meko* or vice versa was obvious during my fieldwork. This disagreement has led to two groups: 1) those who believe that the finding of the *sasandu* predated the founding of the *meko* (e.g., Ledoh, Fanggidae, Mesah); 2) those who believe that the *meko ai* (wooden gong) was founded before the *sasandu* (e.g., Haning, Sjoen, Mooy, Lusi-Nggebu). Along with this disagreement, some notions on the history and the types of *meko* have been discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

In discussing the structure of the *meko*, Basile does not go deeper into the social structure, the dyadic and the triadic concepts, which underpins Rotenese concepts of order and perfection. Basile's focus is more on how these concepts are implemented in *Bini*, and how *sasandu*-accompanied songs have changed over the years.

2.3.3. Basile, Christopher. 2001. "Nusa Tenggara Timur (The Eastern Lesser Sundas): Roti." In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* Vol. 12 (2nd edition) edited by Stanley Sadie, 358-359. London: Macmillan.

Basile's research in the second edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* discusses: 1) the correlation between the *meko* and the *sasandu*; and 2) the structure of a *meko*. Compared to Basile's publication in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, this article provides less information about the *sasandu* and the *meko*. Furthermore, the term "*meko* gong ensemble" (2001, 358) used by Basile in this article is confusing because the local term for gong is *meko*. Although the word *meko* originally referred to the Rotenese wooden or bamboo xylophone, later it was adopted for imported metal gongs (Refer to section 6.8. *Summary*). Therefore, to call a Rotenese gong ensemble "*meko* gong ensemble" is redundant. The Rotenese

call their wooden gong “*meko ai*,” the bamboo gong “*meko o*,” the iron gong “*meko besik*,” and the brass gong “*meko lilok*.” In a personal communication with Basile on August 29, 2018, he explained that the new term “*meko gong*” came up as a result of editorial decisions made by the Grove editors.

2.3.4. Basile, Christopher. 2003. "Tradition and Change in Rotinese Sasandu-accompanied Song." PhD diss., Monash University.

In gathering information, Basile uses techniques such as ethnographic participant-observation, informal interviewing, and personal communication. His dissertation does not intend to explain specifically *sasandu* playing techniques, but instead the changes of *sasandu*-accompanied songs. Even though Basile uses word “teacher” as referring to Rotenese musicians, this term refers more to an informant with some knowledge and skills in a particular musical instrument playing, rather than his or another music instructor.

In studying Rotenese music, musical instruments and performance, Basile (2003, 14-16) adopts ethnographic research and draws the theoretical mainframes from the works of Alan Merriam (1964), Anthony Seeger (1987), Clifford Geertz (1973) and Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1990). As a result, he is able to construct an ethnographic interpretation from the insider perspective (2003, 14).

Even though Basile’s research focuses on Rotenese *sasandu*, he includes a small discussion on the *meko* (e.g., history, tuning system, playing techniques, and manufacture) in his dissertation. There are two reasons for including the *meko* in his writing: 1) the *sasandu* and the *meko* share a common repertoire and tuning; and 2) they both play a significant role in any Rotenese social gatherings (Basile 2003: 53). As Basile focuses his study in the change of

sasandu accompanied songs, the information on Rotenese gongs then can be considered as secondary to the *sasandu*.

Unfortunately, his dissertation is only provided in English and stored at two university libraries in Australia (i.e., Monash University and University of Western Australia) and at the Australian National Library. Although Basile (personal communication on August 29, 2018) explained about his attempts to find support for an Indonesian translation in Indonesia unfortunately nobody is interested in assisting. The English version of his dissertation is not available at the library of Rote-Ndao Regency. This practice is contrary to Wadsworth's (1997, 17) four conceptual parties to any research (i.e., those who it is for; those who it is ultimately for; those who are the researchers; those who are the researched). Concerning the fourth concept, Bendrups (2005, 7) suggests that the research findings should not only benefit the academic community but it should matter more to the community under research. Another simple practice of giving benefits to the researched is by providing translation of the researcher's report to the local community.

In *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (1998b, 800), Basile mentions four muted gongs (i.e., the *meko ina makamu*, the *meko nggasa dae*, the *meko leko dae*, and the *meko ana dae*) in a *meko lalangak esa*; but in his 2003 dissertation this information has been corrected. The number of muted gongs was revised from four to only two gong pieces (i.e., the *meko ina taladak* and the *meko nggasa laik*). This revision is in line with my fieldwork observation.

Basile (2003, 57) argues that the positioning of paired gongs (the *meko nggasa*, the *meko leko* and the *meko ana*) is determined by the frequency produced by each gong (e.g., lower pitched *meko* will be suspended above the higher pitched). I find that this principle relates to the Rotenese dyadic system (a dualistic symbolic classification system that begins with a recognition

among the Rotenese that there is a distinction between the concept of ideal world and reality) that includes: numbers, cardinal directions, parts of the body, colors, coordinates and metals. (Refer to subsection 5.3.2. *The Dyadic System in Relation to Rotenese Concepts of Parallelism and Complementarity*.)

Basile's notion of "young players playing the *meko* being like carpenters hammering nails" (2003, 58) was also evident in the playing of *Nusa Tua Meni* Music and Dance Studio in Ba'a. Basile observed during his research that young players strike their gongs with full energy and enthusiasm. Most of the time, the sound they produce is very loud. The video recording of *Li Tai Benu* played by *Nusa Tua Meni* Music and Dance Studio that I took during in the field clearly shows this (see the video of *Nusa Tua Meni meko* playing in the Appendix).

This dissertation is authoritative because: 1) Basile conducted a long-term fieldwork project on Rote over a five-year period (i.e., one month in 1992, nine months in 1993, two months in 1995, and another two months in 1997). Being on the island during these times enabled Basile to observe how the *sasandu-accompanied* songs had been changing over those five years (1992 to 1997); 2) most of his research teachers and collaborators could be considered either knowledgeable, skilled or distinguished Rotenese musicians/non musicians (Basile 2003, 16-24).

2.3.5. Soh, Andre Z. and Maria N.D.K. Indrayana. 2008. *Rote Ndao Mutiara dari Selatan: Falsafah dan Pandangan Hidup Suku Rote tentang Lontar*. Jakarta: Kelompok Penggerak Aktivitas Kebudayaan.

Soh's research focuses primarily on the sociology of the Rotenese and the West Timorese (1984, 1985, 1989, 1990, 2008b). It is only in his 2008 publication that he discusses more aspects of the Rotenese community, particularly in relation to palm trees. He dedicates one chapter to the history of the *sasando*.

Surprisingly, Soh uses the word “*sasando*” instead of “*sasandu*” in referring to the pentatonic plucked-zither chordophone. He does not distinguish between the *sasandu* and the *sasando*. There are two possible explanations for the use of the term “*sasando*.” First, data was collected from interviews with some Rotenese key collaborators living outside Rote, probably in Kupang. Second, field research was conducted in Rote, but he chose the word “*sasando*” instead of “*sasandu*” because this is the term known by most Indonesians.

In personal communication with Maria N.D.K. Indrayana (May 30, 2017), the daughter of the late Soh and the co-author of this book, she explained that the research was undertaken on Rote for a long period of time and took more than five years to collect the information, which mostly were interviews with key informants. This information helps ruling out the first possibility noted above. The second possibility is likely to be more plausible. Although Soh knows that the word “*sasando*” does not belong to the Rotenese, it is used in his writing for the instrument’s popularity among many Indonesians.

Soh mentions briefly that *meko* provides accompaniment to the Rotenese dances and the *hehelok* (sung Rotenese poems). He also talks briefly about the structure of the *meko* and its connection to the *sasandu*, but does not mention the *meko leko*.⁹

Although in the very beginning of his publication, Soh has mentioned that data was collected from key informants (e.g., *manahelo* [traditional chanters]) across Rote, the names of these informants do not appear in this book. As Soh is unclear about how his research participants want to be identified, I assume: 1) his research participants want to be kept anonymous; or 2) Soh forgot to include their names in his publication.

⁹ It is unclear whether he forgets to mention the *meko leko* or does not acknowledge the instrument.

2.3.6. Haning, Paul A. 2009. *Sasandu: Alat Musik Tradisional Masyarakat Rote Ndao*. Kupang: CV Kairos.

Haning is probably the most productive living Rotenese writer. His publications span from the Rotenese family law (2010a), Rotenese traditional architecture (2009d), Rotenese traditional rituals and customs (2009f), Rotenese language and literature (2009a), Rotenese myths and history (2009b, 2010b, 2013a, 2015c), to Rotenese traditional musical instruments (2009e). All of these publications, including *Sasandu: Alat Musik Tradisional Masyarakat Rote Ndao*, are distributed in and around Kupang, the capital city of East Nusa Tenggara Province. My introduction to these publications was through the courtesy of Haning and the head of the office of the Library and Archive of the Rote-Ndao Regency.

Haning (2009) discusses the origin and functions of the *sasandu* and the *meko* in Rotenese culture (i.e., weddings, funerals, and religious ceremonies). He also expresses his concern about the future of *meko* playing as it is becoming less popular among the younger Rotenese generation. Haning is not alone. Some of my research participants have also expressed their same concern about the reluctance of the young Rotenese to learn their musical tradition (e.g., Therik, Sjioen and Nalle).

Haning, a retired teacher and historian, discusses Rotenese music using the outsider and insider perspectives. On the one hand, he considers himself an “outsider” as he is not a musician. On the other hand, he is an insider because he comes from Rotenese culture. He collected his primary and secondary data from interviews with Rotenese musicians (e.g., Ena Hayer-Pah, Yonas Mooy, and Yereimias Henukh) and existing publications. His writing is authoritative at least for two reasons: 1) Haning was a teacher and teachers are considered knowledgeable people in many places in Indonesia, particularly in the eastern parts of Indonesia. This view is in line with Andy Hargreaves’ (2003) definition of teacher’s job: “...Teachers, more than anyone, are

expected to build learning communities, create the knowledge society, and develop the capacities for innovation, flexibility and commitment to change that are essential to economic prosperity” (9); and 2) Haning’s information comes from reputable and respected persons, such as Rotenese *manahelo* and musicians.

Although this book bears the title *Sasandu: Alat Musik Tradisional Masyarakat Rote Ndao* (“Sasandu: A Rotenese Traditional Musical Instrument”), it only discusses the *sasandu* in three of its nine chapters. The *meko* and Rotenese dances are each discussed in two chapters, while one chapter is dedicated to Rotenese songs.

Haning makes a minor mistake on page eight when he states *meko ina taladak* and *meko ina tataik* are pitched on G and A (below middle C), whereas based on my research observation *meko ina taladak* and *meko ina tataik* are pitched on A and G (below middle C). In another conversation with Haning on February 25, 2016, he has clarified this mistake as unintentional.

2.3.7. Sine, Yandri Y.I. 2012. "Gong Kayu Rote." Bachelor's thesis, Program Studi Seni Musik FSP-UKSW.

Sine’s thesis for a bachelor’s degree is written in Indonesian and focuses on the history of *meko ai* (Rotenese wooden gong). Research was conducted in Kupang from the end of 2010 to the beginning of 2011. Sine’s aim was to transcribe the recordings of four *meko* music pieces (i.e., *Batu Matia Telu*, *Te’orenda*, *Lelendo Ndao*, and *Ta’ibenu*) into Western music notation. These four dance music pieces were chosen because of their popularity among the Rotenese.

Sine collected his information from one key informant only, Hendrik Pah, a Rotenese traditional musician and *sasandu* maker who lives in Kupang. One obvious disadvantage of this method is whether information given by Pah should be considered as reliable because it cannot be compared and contrasted with other research participants.

Based on the information given by Pah, Sine (2012, 27) argues that the *sasando*¹⁰ was the first Rotenese traditional instrument. Soon it was followed by bronze gongs brought by the Makasaresse traders, and wooden gongs came the latest. Sine does not discuss the coming of wooden gongs. Did they come relatively recently to serve as a substitute for bronze gongs?

Sine's statement regarding the *sasando* as the first Rotenese traditional instrument is questionable. According to Indonesian grammar, in the term "sasandu gong," the word "gong" becomes the modifier and "sasandu" becomes the modified. This clearly explains that the *sasandu* refers to the "gong," in particular, its tuning and music.

There are some differences in the names of gong pieces along with the social structure underpinning performance. For example, *meko ina taladak* or *laladak* becomes *meko ina laladan*; *meko nggasa laik* and *meko nggasa dae(k)* become *meko nggasa laing* and *meko nggasa daeng*. In response to this dissimilarity in writing, I have spoken on phone with Haning and Theedens (personal communication on August 9, 2017). They both are convinced that the mistake was made by Sine.

In Sine's thesis (2012, 20), the *meko leko laik* or the *meko leko* and the *meko leko dae* or the *meko paiseli* are categorized as parts of the *meko ana*. The social structure of the *meko ai* is as follows: 1) the *meko ina* – the mother; 2) the *meko nggasa* – the father; and 3) the *meko ana* (consisting of a pair of *meko leko* and *meko ana*) – the children. The social structure proposed by Sine is similar to that of Lusi-Nggebu and Penu (refer to subsection 5.3.2. *The Dyadic System in Relation to Rotenese Concepts of Parallelism and Complementarity*).

¹⁰ The word "sasando" is the term used by Pah throughout the interviews.

2.3.8. Adoe, Johanis F. 2013. *Rote Ndao Selayang Pandang: Sebuah Refleksi Pemikiran ke Depan*. Kupang: Pencetak Kre@si.Com.

In general, this book is a cultural reflection of Rote, which is analyzed through primary and secondary sources, as well as Adoe's experience as Rotenese diaspora living in Kupang. The discussion on the *meko* is three pages long, including an argument that the *meko* is the oldest Rotenese musical instrument, and the social structure of the *meko*. This publication is written in Indonesian and distributed around the city of Kupang. Adoe presents his research results using an insider perspective.

Adoe argues that *meko* was the oldest Rotenese musical instrument which predated the invention of the *sasando*.¹¹ The *sasando* adopted the sound of the *meko*, and for this reason it is called the *sasando* gong. Like Nalle, who argues that the words "*sasandu* gong" imply the connection between the first with the second words, Adoe based his argument on this assumption. Adoe's argument is in line with that of Haning (2009e, 7) and Basile (2003, 54).

The final writing which will be discussed in this chapter is a PhD dissertation by Fox. This writing is significant to my dissertation because it discusses the concepts of dyad and triad which underpin the Rotenese understanding of their cultural world. I draw these concepts to understand the social structure of the *meko* and *meko* playing.

2.3.9. Fox, James J. 1968. "The Rotinese: A Study of the Social Organization of an Eastern Indonesian People." PhD diss., University of Oxford.

Fox conducted his ethnographic research on Rote in 1965-1966. He gathered his data from interviews with some *manahelo* across Rote (e.g., Stefanus Adulanu, Stefanus Amalo, A. Amalo

¹¹ The word "*sasando*" is used instead of "*sasandu*" because it is the word known in Timor and Indonesia (Adoe 2016).

and Lisbet Adulanu). This dissertation aims to contest the theory of the Leiden anthropologists (e.g., Jan Petrus Benjamin de Josselin de Jong, Patrick Edward de Josselin de Jong and F.A.E. van Wouden) concerning the Indonesian organization of society into the principles of unilineal descent (Fox 1968, x). The dualism between male and female is legitimized through patrilineal and matrilineal systems.¹² Fox does not totally reject the idea of dualism, but he relates the principle of complementary dualism with *bini*. A *bini* is an “abstraction of conventional wisdom” (Fox 1968, xiv) which comprises of dyadic sets. For instance, the *ina* (woman/wife) – the *tou* (man/husband), the *ina* (mother) – the *ama* (father), the *feto* (sister) – the *na* (brother) (Fox 1968, xxii).

I borrow the dyadic and triadic systems of Fox and adopt it in discussing *meko* music. For example, the complexity of rhythms played by each pair of gongs and the holding of a pair of gongs are discussed in accordance with the principle of complementarity and superiority. The *nggasa* which is labelled *dae* (low) if paired with another *nggasa laik* (high) will be played below it.

Like Basile, Fox’s dissertation is not available on Rote either in English or Indonesian. Fox, conducting his research on Rote for almost fifty years (1965 to 2014), documented *bini* from across Rote, and produced many publications regarding Rote, has raised an ethical issue. Giving back research results to the research participants is considered as a practice of treating the studied community in the highest regard (MacNeil and Fernandez 2006, 49).

The publication of his 2016 book *Master Poets, Ritual Masters: The Art of Oral Composition among the Rotenese of Eastern Indonesia* marked his fiftieth year of research on

¹² For example, in Batak-Toba’s patrilineal system the dualism between man and woman is supplementary. The first social group or *hula-hula* (the wife’s brother) gives their women to other group called *boru* (the sister). The ideal marriage, then happens, between the *hula-hula*’s daughter with the *boru*’s son (Kroef 1954, 847).

Rote. I do not discuss this publication in this chapter because this book is an examination of oral compositions (*bini*) of seventeen different poets from across Rote (Fox 2016, xii), whereas the focus of my study is on the *meko*.

2.4. Summary

My primary hindrance in building knowledge based on secondary source information is the lack of availability of written documents either published or unpublished. Very few publications have been written on Rotenese traditional musical instruments, and most of them discuss the *sasandu gong* and the *sasandu biola* (*sasando*). As most of this writings are not available in stores and libraries, there are two possible ways to obtain them: 1) through related government offices; 2) directly through the author.

Although the publications by Rotenese scholars (e.g., Soh and Adoe) represent the voice of the community under study, to some extent they also represent the “culture” of their new home, namely Kupang. For instance, the decision they made to use the word “*sasando*,” which does not have meaning to the Rotenese people on the island, instead of “*sasandu*.” They possibly knew that the word “*sasando*” was coined immediately after the building of Hotel Sasando in Kupang in the 1980s (Haning 2009e, 12).

Finally, none of these writings relate *meko* music with the concepts of dyad and triad. In fact, these concepts are very significant in comprehending: 1) the number of a *meko* set (*meko lalanggak esa*) (refer to subsection 5.3.2. *The Dyadic System in Relation to Rotenese Concepts of Parallelism and Complementarity*); 2) the layout of wooden gong (the *meko ai*) (refer to subsection 5.3.2. *The Dyadic System in Relation to Rotenese Concepts of Parallelism and Complementarity*); 3) *meko* playing (refer to subsection 7.6.2. *Comparing Li Kakamusu of Temas Village and Eahun Kampong*); and 4) *meko* music. For instance, although there is some

disagreement concerning the number of a *meko* set (e.g. nine, ten and eleven), the understanding of these concepts helps me to draw a conclusion. Another example is that in *meko* music the complexity of gong rhythms relates to the role of each gong in the social structure. For instance, the rhythms of the *meko ana* (representing the children) are less complicated than the rhythms of the *meko leko* (representing the uncle and the aunt) and the *meko nggasa* (representing the father).

Chapter 3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses how research on Rotenese gongs was conducted in order to answer two research questions: (1) How is *meko* music conceptualized by the Rotenese? And (2) how is *meko* music sustained by the Rotenese? This chapter is divided into three main sections: (1) the pre-fieldwork phase; (2) the fieldwork phase; and (3) the post-fieldwork phase. My primary aim of presenting these three phases is to give a brief portrayal of the entire research process to readers: from the preparation to the writing up and how things had to adapt in accordance with the changing conditions of the island.

One fundamental thing that I have learned from the entire research process in Rote is that flexibility and adaptability are vital to the success of my research. Flexibility is a willingness to change or compromise (Stevenson 2010); whereas adaptability is the quality or state of being adaptable (Stevenson 2010). In short, flexibility refers to my willingness to change my mindset including my research methodology and approach to new conditions, while adaptability refers to how I adjust myself to these new conditions, primarily related to cultural aspects.

The pre-fieldwork phase tells readers about what I did in the first year of my study at Otago University in preparation for the fieldwork. The first year of my study was to gain as much as information about the island, the people, Rotenese gong music and the *sasandu* via secondary sources. The first year of my study was crucial because it prepared me, a choral conductor and composer with no formal background in ethnomusicology, to become an ethnomusicologist and ethnographer.

The fieldwork phase discusses what I did while on the island of Rote, for instance, how data was collected, how research participants were recruited and interviewed. In this phase, dealing with cultural and infrastructural problems is also discussed. For instance, “*jam karek*,” a

local habit of being late, a lack of commitment from some research participants to keep scheduled appointments, frequent power outages, and rare availability of gas in certain months.

The post-fieldwork phase deals with method data analysis. How I interpreted the data, how I represented the community studied and myself as the researcher (reflexivity) are just two examples discussed in this subsection.

3.1. Limitations

I acknowledged that my inability to communicate in the Rotenese language was a minor barrier, particularly with some research participants who do not speak Indonesian fluently. But being able to speak in the Rotenese language does not necessarily mean problems do not occur, because the Rotenese language comprises several dialects which are sometimes not mutually intelligible. According to Jermy Balukh (2008, 257), the Rotenese language is divided into nine dialects as follows: 1) Landu-Ringgou-Oepao, 2) Bilba-Diu-Lelenuk, 3) Korbaffo, 4) Bokai, 5) Termanu-Talae-Keka, 6) Ba'a-Loleh, 7) Dengka-Lelain, 8) Thie and 9) Oenale-Delha.

In dealing with language barrier, in particular during the interview and transcription process, I was assisted by some local friends, who provided translations. I felt that involving knowledgeable local people in the translation of these interviews remained the best way to overcome this obstacle.

3.2. The Pre-Fieldwork Phase

Making a decision to start a doctoral study in ethnomusicology was a big step in my life because for many years I was trained as a choral composer and conductor. I started my study at Otago University with no knowledge in ethnomusicology and ethnography. Therefore, the first year of my study at Otago University became decisive in relation to my future career as an ethnomusicologist. Within the first nine months of my study, I took one required course on

Ethnography and audited a course on Ethnomusicology. At the same time, I also completed the draft of my first three chapters (i.e., Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology). One small research project on the Cook Island Community of First Church in Dunedin as part of the Ethnography course, was helpful in preparing for the ultimate research. For instance, I learned how to recruit and interview my participants, and how to conduct ethical research.

During the planning or the pre-fieldwork phase, I learned about: (1) how much literature (either published or unpublished) on Rotenese *meko* music has been written, how much of it is available and how accessible this information is; (2) how much supporting information such as audio and video recordings, and media information such as websites is available; (3) the general conditions of the research site (e.g., geographical, climate, access to the island and resource issues), which relates to deciding a suitable research strategy; and (4) how to gain access to the local communities.

The first point leads me to comprehend what research on *meko* music has been done and what writings on *meko* music are available. How much information can I draw on from these writings? How do these writings inform me? How recent are these writings? What gaps are to fill in? I classify all these questions as literature review (refer to Chapter 2 *Literature Review*) which will prepare me for fieldwork based on the work of others and the intended data collection methods.

The second point guides me to ask questions such as: what kinds of recordings are available, and what is accessible on the Internet? How might websites be helpful to build my understanding about the Rotenese culture and, in particular, Rotenese *meko* music? How reliable is this information? All these questions are grouped into a category of complementary secondary information, as contrasted with academic publications.

The third point serves as a conceptual geographic, social and cultural map of the island. I ask myself these following questions: 1) How do I get to Rote? 2) What modes of transportation are available to transport myself to Rote? 3) How do I find more information about these modes of transportation? 4) Where will I stay during my research? 5) How do I find and recruit my research participants? 6) How do I conduct my research on Rote? 7) How do I reach my research participants' homes? 8) Is electrical power available throughout Rote? 9) Are there any issues with power outages? And 10) Is reliable internet available on the island?

The fourth point directs me to what is called “credibility” by Ricardo D. Trimillos (2004). Trimillos, a Filipino immigrant in the United States, discusses his credibility as a Japanese musical instrument instructor of the *koto* (a Japanese plucked-stringed instrument) at the University of Hawai'i. Even though he is not of Japanese descent and is not able to speak Japanese, he is considered a credible *koto* instructor for three reasons: 1) he is a *koto* performer and a student of Kay Mikami, a Japanese *koto* performer, who was also a teacher of these renowned ethnomusicologists: Jane Freeman Moulin, Barbara Smith, and Roger R. Vetter; 2) Trimillos is a *hakase* (professor); and 3) Trimillos, physically looks Japanese (Trimillos 2004, 36-37). Along with Trimillos there are several other ethnomusicologists who also mention this term, “credibility” indirectly in their writings (e.g., Stock and Chiener 2008, 115; Rice 2008, 52).

The term “credibility” that will be discussed in this chapter is slightly different from Trimillos's. Trimillos's (2004) “credibility” refers to research integrity, whereas my definition is more associated with “personal credentials.” Based on my experience as an Indonesian, having “credibility” (in this context, “academic credentials”) is fundamental, especially for an outsider who is looking for acceptance from the cultural insiders.

Although I am an Indonesian and can be considered “insider” in terms of nationality, in fact I am outsider because I was born of a different ethnic group. Ethnically, I am Javanese and do not speak any Rotenese. Having a sort of “credibility” could help me gain access to the Rotenese community. Access to the community will depend much on the credibility of the researcher. For instance, the credibility of a researcher may come from his nationality, academic background, job position and musical achievements. I call this last task “building credibility as a way of accessing the Rotenese community.”

The internet has become an important resource and tool for gathering secondary information. I call information provided on the internet “complementary secondary information.” The internet complemented the scholarly information provided by academic journals and books.

There is some related information available on local websites which is helpful for my research. These websites include: 1) the official governmental website of Rote Ndao Regency (e.g., <http://www.bapelitbang.rotendaokab.go.id/>, <https://rotendaokab.bps.go.id/>) which contains information on Rotenese geography, government, population, education, religion, economy, and so on; 2) Tony Lalay’s musical archive (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9B-ZIOBUVJk>) Lalay is of Rotenese descent who currently lives in Jakarta. His archive contain some music recordings from Rote and Flores, including the *meko* and *sasandu*; 3) Yohanis Puling Tang’s blog (<http://jhonpantar.blogspot.co.id/2016/11/sejarah-pulau-rote.html>), which covers the history of Rote; 4) Yusuf Henukh’s website article (<http://www.moral-politik.com/2015/05/nenek-moyang-orang-rote-berasal-dari-bangsa-yahudi/>) which argues for the relationship between the ancestors of the Rotenese and the Israelites.

3.2.1. Sources on Planning Fieldwork

In the initial phase of the research design, I described the fieldwork as a *terra incognita* (an unknown land). This term is suggested for two reasons: (1) I was not familiar with the island and had not visited it; and (2) I did not have any Rotenese acquaintances on the island. Based on these two facts, it became imperative for me to find some assistance from the Rotenese people or preferably musicians who had access to the island. This subsection discusses two things: (1) what is known about the island (including the geographical facts); and (2) how the quest for research informants has been made, along with its results.

Rote is an island of 1278 square kilometers in size (BPS 2014) located southwest to the larger island, Timor. The geographic coordinates of Rote are $-10^{\circ}44'10.21''$ South and $123^{\circ}07'13.94''$ East. It is divided into 96 small islands. Rote is the name of the archipelago but also the largest island. From the total 96 islands, only 6 islands are inhabited: Rote, Usu, Nuse, nDao, Landu, and Do'o.



Figure 3.1. A map of Indonesia by Galih Aulia (2018)

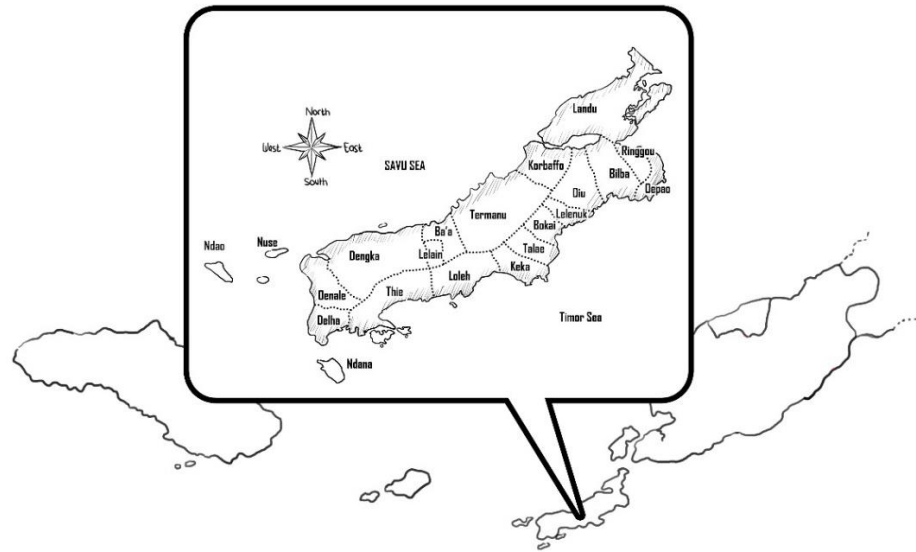


Figure 3.2. A map of Rote by Galih Aulia (2018)

Sea transportation from Timor (the largest island in the East Nusa Tenggara Province where the capital city is located) to Rote has been a concern for many years. Ferries have become the primary mode of transportation to the island, but the strong winds, popularly known as a tropical cyclone, often makes sailing on the Pukuafu Strait a treacherous journey. The tragedy of Motor Vessel Citra Mandala Bahari on Pukuafu Strait on January 31, 2006, which killed one hundred and seven passengers, was just an example how traveling through this strait is quite risky (Putra 2006).

In 2013, Transnusa Aviation operated return flights from West Timor to Rote, but it discontinued soon because the Rotenese Government and the aviation company could not come to an agreement (Anonymous 2013). In the absence of Transnusa, Susi Air Aviation came in and operated a twice-in-a-week flights from West Timor to Rote (Mondays and Saturdays), but soon, this airline stopped operating and was replaced by Wings Air in December 2014 (Anonymous 2014).

In researching information and access to the island, I attempted to contact Basile through his former academic supervisor, Margaret Kartomi. Basile's email on September 9, 2014 suggested that I communicate with Theedens, a central figure in Rotenese music. "I recommend working with Djoni Theedens, it is good that you know him and I cannot think of anyone better."

Theedens, a Rotenese *sasandu* player, has become my personal contact to access the community under study. Theedens was born and raised in Kupang. He was formally educated as a classical guitarist at the Indonesian Institute of Arts in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Currently, Theedens is the web administrator of *Sasando Dari Selatan Indonesia* (the official website for the association of *sasandu* players).

In my preparation for the fieldwork, I spoke with Theedens, particularly on issues concerning the history of the *sasandu* and *meko*. Theedens provided me with some copies of his writings on Rotenese music to support my information of these topics.

In addition to Theedens, I was also looking for two other research informants: Paul Haning and Andre Z. Soh. Haning and Soh were two names identified in my pre-fieldwork phase. Haning's name has been on my radar since I supervised the thesis writing of Sine. I have known Soh's name since the first year of my PhD study, in particular through his publications. In finding these two key persons, I asked two friends living in Indonesia for help: 1) Pinky Elisabeth Taka a graduate of Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga; and 2) Rubin Lukito, a music faculty member of Petra Christian University in Surabaya.

Taka, who formerly was my student at Satya Wacana Christian University, promised to find the contact details of Paul Haning through her younger brother in Kupang. Unfortunately, I never got news from her. I texted Taka, but she did not respond to me.

Another friend, Lukito, helped me find the contact details of Maria N.D.K. Indrayana (the oldest daughter of Andre Z. Soh). Indrayana and Lukito work at the same university, but in different departments. Using the phone number given by Lukito, I immediately contacted Indrayana. Indrayana responded quickly to my message and apologized for not being able to connect me with her father, Andre Z. Soh, who had just passed away on August 25, 2014, just two weeks before I contacted Indrayana (i.e., on September 9, 2014).

When hearing this news, I was shocked. The late Soh was another central figure and widely known as an authoritative scholar on Rotenese culture. Indrayana, who had not learned much about Rotenese culture from her late father, offered me help.

Beyond providing information about Theedens, Basile's additional help was to connect me with Tony Lalay, the oldest grandson of Saul Lalay. The older Lalay was one of the first four Rotenese *meko* builders along with Mooy, Filli and Jeremiah Ledoh. Lalay connected me with his cousin, Ernest Sula and his uncle, Herman Ledoh (a son of Jeremiah Ledoh).

In response to my questions regarding the research plan, Lalay suggested that I focus the research on West Rote. Based on the information given by Ledoh, Lalay argued that West Rote has a stronger tradition of *meko* playing than East Rote. He suggested I conduct research on places such as Ba'a, Dengka, Thie, and Oenale. In addition, Lalay sent me six digital *meko* audio recordings he made during his visit to the island a few years earlier.

3.2.2. Building Credibility in Accessing the Rotenese Community

As I was looking for an opportunity to establish my credibility, I received a short message from Theedens. The message was sent to my Facebook inbox on February 5, 2014 and invited me to participate in the *Komposisi Karya Cipta Musik Sasando Tingkat Nasional 2014* (the 2014 National Competition for New *Sasando* Music Works). I did not respond immediately to his

request, but I was fully aware that this was a rare chance to increase my credibility among the Rotenese musicians nationwide.

In the next four months, I was able to complete two newly composed pieces for the *sasando* between the first and the second week of June 2014. By June 10 and 16, 2014 I submitted these two pieces to the competition committee. The first piece is titled *Kia Ora* (Māori words for “be well” / “welcome”) and the second one is headed *Te Puoro Hou* (Māori words for “new music”). On September 1, 2014, *Kia Ora* was officially announced as the first-prize winner and would be professionally recorded and nationally distributed in 2015 together with the other five selected works. Unfortunately, as of 2018 there has been no news about this recording.

3.2.3. Departure Plan

Concerning what should be done in the first month of my field research, I made some plans (i.e., deciding the date of departure to Kupang; deciding what I would do in Kupang prior to my departure to Rote; deciding the date of departure to Rote; deciding where I would stay and what I would do in Rote).

The date of departure was scheduled between the second and the third week of January 2015. These weeks were chosen for one reason: the planting season was almost over so it would be more convenient to hold meetings and interviews with my research participants who mostly were farmers. I would fly directly from Semarang (the closest airport from my hometown of Salatiga) to Kupang.

In Kupang, I would stay for several days to meet with Theedens and address important things to consider in the field such as: the weather, local transportation, cultural taboos and the people. If possible, I would also learn very quickly the basic playing techniques of the *sasandu* from him. Learning the *sasandu* is important because it has been associated with the *meko* (e.g.,

Basile 1998b, 799; 2001, 358; Soh 2008b, 37; Adoe 2013, 139). These two instruments share in common features (e.g., tuning and music pieces). Learning the *sasandu* could help me to understand the *meko*.

My departure to Rote would be decided later in Kupang, considering the weather and the availability of transportation. For instance, knowing when the monsoon season in Indonesia occurs would help to reduce risk. The monsoon season usually runs from the middle of December to the end of February or the beginning of March. Strong winds and heavy rain caused by the monsoons can delay public transportation, primarily sea and air.

During the first two weeks in Rote, I would stay in Ledoh's house as suggested by Lalay. Ledoh was chosen because he and his family are part of the history of *meko* production in Rote. Living with him would be considered the best point of departure for my research journey.

I would begin my research with a preliminary observation in some Rotenese *nusak* in the West Rote. The observation would include topics of interests such as: the history of *meko*, the philosophy of *meko* and *meko* music. This observation would inform me later about how the case studies (if needed) would be designed. Prior to making any decisions about what and how many case studies might be used, I would consult first with my academic supervisors. Consultation would be made through email, long-distance phone calls, WhatsApp or Line.

3.3. The Fieldwork Phase

In this subsection, I discuss how the pre-fieldwork phase changed or adjusted in response to cultural issues and infrastructural problems in the field. These were necessary because of the limitations of my knowledge about the island. Being on the island as a participant-observer enabled me to observe, experience and deal with these conditions. For example, dealing with

“*jam karet*”; a lack of commitment to scheduled appointments; having three to four power outages in a week, particularly in the evening; and the scarcity of gasoline etc.

In dealing with “*jam karet*,” I would usually spend my time reading a book, reviewing my research notes or having some informal talks with the family members of my research participants. In anticipating a lack of commitment to a scheduled appointment, I would remind my research participants about the appointment we had made two to three times beforehand (i.e., three to four days before the meeting, a day before the meeting and on the day before my departure to the research participant’s house). If the meeting still did not happen, I would reschedule immediately for another appointment. In adapting to the electricity issue, I had to recharge my laptop, mobile phone and rechargeable lamp during the day so they could be used for two to three hours work in the evening. I also bought a rechargeable bulb that could be used for two to three hours whenever power was down.

Fieldwork is the heart of ethnographic research, but it is not merely a place for gathering data; fieldwork is also a place where connections are confirmed and friendships are made and extended beyond the research period. As Helen Myers (1992, 21) writes: “In fieldwork we see the human face of ethnomusicology.” How much information can be collected from fieldwork depends so much on the researcher’s rapport. Researchers are assessed by the community under study based on their relationships with the community. To quote O’Reilly (2009, 175), “rapport building is a kind of building up of trust.” In short, the rapport of the researcher will determine the researcher’s access to the community being studied which is closely related to his/her success.

The dynamics of these unique social relationships make fieldwork “unpredictable,” even for the most experienced researchers (Madden 2010: 17). As researchers deal with living human

beings, it is inevitable that each participant's perceptions, understandings, feelings and opinions might be similar or contrasting from one another. Idiosyncrasies and inconsistencies of participants will potentially create a place of unexpected surprises and possibilities. It is not a "what-you-see-is-what-you-get" type of work. In fact, the perception might be totally different from the reality.

An example of the unpredictability of the fieldwork is obvious in Johanis Elimanafe's (2015) suggestion to me, "As a foreigner, you should be aware of what is known as "the Rotenese brain"¹³," because "the Rotenese brain" represents the dark sides of the Rotenese (e.g., sly, manipulative and argumentative). Therefore, you have to be very critical to every piece of information given by your research participants. Even though that information may sound "correct," it is possibly only ten percent true." In response to Elimanafe's "warning," I cross-checked the information given by my research participants by comparing and contrasting one from another.

3.3.1. Ethnography

The word ethnography comes from the Greek words "ethno" meaning "people," and "graphy" meaning "writing" (Madden 2010, 16). Ethnography simply means writing about people. Ethnographers write about a community they study based on the community members' stories and the ethnographers' experiences of participating with them.

Malinowsky, a Polish scholar conducting fieldwork research among the Trobriand Islanders at the beginning of the twentieth century, was possibly the first scholar to introduce the

¹³ This term (locally known as *otak Rote*) is very popular among the peoples from East Nusa Tenggara Province, particularly the Timorese. "*Otak Rote*" is always associated with trickery and deceit. It is very common to hear mocking such as: "*Jika ketemu orang Rote dan ular, maka bunuhlah orang Rote terlebih dahulu*" (If you encounter a Rotenese and a snake at once, kill the Rotenese first before you kill the snake) (Henukh 2015b).

research technique known as ethnography (Stanton 2006, 404). Thereafter, ethnography has evolved into several variants (e.g., auto-ethnography, meta-ethnography, and online-ethnography). Auto-ethnography is the writing about the researched community from the perspective of the researcher based on his/her social interactions with the community (it is often used in creative practice as a type of self-reflection). Meta-ethnography is the analyzing and the synthesizing of qualitative research texts in order to create new insights and knowledge. Finally, online-ethnography is the studying online networks and communities (Reeves, Kuper, and Hodges 2008, 512).

Ethnography falls into the category of qualitative research for two reasons: (1) the researcher attempts to comprehend the whole picture of a community from the views of a limited number of participants. The researcher portrays the community based on stories told by a selected number of participants; and (2) the researcher describes and analyzes the views of these participants in order to find themes, from which they can draw some theoretical conclusion through inductive analysis (Krüger 2009, 14).

Ethnography is an active word. On the one hand, it is doing, and on the other hand, it is writing (Nettl 2005, 233; Davies 2008, 4-5). Ethnography is a method and a report or narrative as well. Choosing ethnography as a research method requires the researcher to complete the narrative. In brief, ethnography is only considered complete if both the research and the writing take place.

I chose this approach because conducting ethnographic research is beneficial for me as a researcher. As Wolcott (2008, 65-66) said, there are six benefits of conducting ethnographic research: (1) I become the primary tool of my research. As the central figure of the research, I do the planning, gathering, analyzing, and the writing up of the research reports; (2) I learn how to

manage between professional and personal life, between being a researcher and at the same time an immersed outsider. My ability to manage between professional and personal life is assessed through reflexivity¹⁴ or reflexive writing; (3) I learn to develop my writing talent and present, academically the story about the people through various perspectives; (4) I come up with rich database for further research. Rich database is a result of lengthy period of stay with the community under study including participation, observation, interviewing, personal communication, and learning to perform; (5) I am expected to contribute to ethnomusicological scholarship with a (some) new ethnomusicological theory(ies); finally, (6) I have an opportunity to work directly with my participants. Ethnographic research becomes distinct from other research methods because the research results will heavily depend on how the connections with participants are made. In my case, the deeper relationship I have with my research participants, the deeper information I get from them.

As the eventual product of ethnography is writing, my ethnographic research is a presentation about the Rotenese people and their traditional instruments, the *meko* and the *sasandu* through writing. The voice of the Rotenese, as narrated through interviews and personal communications, is presented to readers based on my observation and interpretation as the researcher. In short, my ethnographic writing is a narrative about Rotenese people and their *meko* as interpreted and presented from my perspective as an immersed outsider. It is the analysis and interpretation that make the story deeper (Geertz 1973).

Participant-observation, informal interviewing and learning to perform as three research techniques¹⁵ used to collect the data in the field, will be discussed in the next subsections.

¹⁴ Reflexivity is “a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference” (Davies 2008, 4). There is a self-awareness of the researcher that his/her personal bias may affect the research’s process and products.

¹⁵ Research techniques are tools utilized by researchers to collect their data in the field (Madden 2010, 25)

3.3.2. Participant-Observation

Participant-observation is the most prominent technique in ethnographic research. The researcher does not only observe the community, but also actively participates in the community's social and musical activities. Participation-observation refers to cultural immersion, meaning that researcher dips him/herself into the lives of the community under study (Madden 2010, 16). By immersing him/herself, the researcher is attempting to imitate the life of the community being studied. To quote Coffey (1999, 65), "We build embodied knowledge by training our bodies to do things our participants do, we attempt to acquire another's "habitus" and we train our bodies to fit into the field". Cultural immersion is different from what Malinowski (1884-1942) and Mead (1901-1978) did in the early days of anthropological research by distancing the researcher from the community under study.

Staying with Rotenese families during my fieldwork was the best way to be immersed in the community under study. It helped me understand the Rotenese culture through first-hand experiences (e.g., language, dialects, ways of life, customs and traditions). Living with Rotenese musicians helped me engage in their musical activities and observe what they did when the music played, and how it influenced those involved. Participating and observing the Rotenese musical activities through sensory observation (i.e., smelling, seeing, hearing, tasting, and feeling) gave me a deeper understanding about what they did. The explanation of why they did only came from the interviewing, while learning to perform helped answer the questions of how they did it.

In the pre-fieldwork phase, I decided to split my stay in Rote into several two-to-four weeks homestay with different Rotenese families, starting my first month in the house of Herman Ledoh and then moving to others' houses. My initial plans changed as I talked with

Sula.¹⁶ I decided to stay at Sula's house at Ba'a for the entire research and did several three-to-four-day stays in the houses of some of my research participants instead. I did this because: 1) the distance from Sula's house in Ba'a to all research sites in Rote can be reached by motorcycle within less than three hours; 2) Ba'a is the capital city of the Rote-Ndao Regency, where all government offices are located; 3) Ba'a has greater access to the internet and information than other research locations; 4) the electricity in Ba'a is available longer during the day than in other cities; and 5) Ba'a has direct access to sea and air transportation.

The Sulas did not only provide a room for me to stay in and meals to eat, but they also lent me their motorcycle to use during my fieldwork. As public transportation in Rote is unreliable, this motorcycle helped my mobility on the island immensely.

During the fieldwork, I was actively involved at Efata Timorese Evangelical Church in Lekioen Urban Village, Ba'a. I served as the choir director of Imanuel choir¹⁷ from Efata Church, and occasionally was asked to serve as an accompanist for the congregational singing. My full participation in this church had no direct relation to *meko* music and playing. I did this with three intentions. The first was to share the same faith as Christians. The second was to share my knowledge and skills as a choral conductor. Finally, the third was to promote the quality of choral singing in that local church. As a researcher, I transferred my research participants from mere participants to beneficiaries in the research process (Bendrups 2005, 7). Both the researcher and the researched enjoyed the mutual benefits. On the one hand, I gained the understanding of

¹⁶ Sula is currently the head of general affairs at the House of Representatives of Rote-Ndao Regency. He is also active as a church elder at Efata Timorese Evangelical Church, a *maneleo* (a tribe chief) of *Bo'ai*, and a radio announcer at Swara Malole, the only radio station in Rote.

¹⁷ I first joined this choir in the beginning of February 2015 as a singer. The Sulas brought me and introduced me to the choir members as a researcher from Satya Wacana Christian University. Later, I was asked to direct this choir when they recognized me as a choral director and composer

Rotenese gong music from my research participants, on the other hand, they gained knowledge and skills of choral singing from me.

My contribution as a musician to the local community had indirectly benefited me, particularly in gathering information concerning *meko* music and players. The members of the church's congregation who were quite diverse (e.g., *meko* players, *maneleo*, teachers, university lecturers, businessmen, farmers and government officials), were happy to provide me with any relevant information around *meko* music and players. According to Spradley's (1980, 58) degree of involvement in fieldwork, my participation can be categorized as "active."

During the fieldwork, I also had some opportunities to attend events where *meko* was played; for instance, a wedding at Teras Village; a funeral at Teras Village and Eahun Kampong; an annual music and dance festival at Ba'a; and *Hus* (an annual ceremony) at Boni Village. At these events I came as a guest who experienced my senses through these musical events. Some information also came from discussions and informal conversations. The topics varied widely and could span from everyday life, politics, culture, social issues, wisdom, to the arts.

However the term participant-observation is problematic (Wolcott 2008, 47), because it requires a researcher to become an observer and participant at once. There is always tension between observing and participating. In dealing with this, Wolcott (2008, 50) suggests different labels for describing what the researcher does in the field: experiencing, enquiring, and examining. Experiencing is a term that may replace the participation-observation technique, in which the researcher gains information directly through their physical senses. The researcher learns about the community under study through smelling, seeing, hearing, tasting and feeling. Enquiring or interviewing is another way of gathering information by asking participants about

what is happening. Finally, examining directs us towards what has been written about the community under study. Examining is similar to a literature review.

Although Wolcott (2008) criticizes the tension within the labeling of participant-observation and attempts to come up with new suggestions, he does not make any substantial change. He does change the term from “participant-observation” to “experiencing,” but it does not change the whole idea, because in doing participant-observation a researcher gains knowledge from seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting. One thing added by Wolcott (2008) is the use of a literature review as another important research technique.

Rather than adopting Wolcott’s experiencing technique, I maintained the old labeling “participant-observation” for it suggests a twofold action: experiencing and evaluating. Experience and information are gained through the physical senses, and evaluated by brain, especially in regards to what happens, how something happens, why something happens, how it differs from one another, etc.

3.3.3. Informal Interviewing

Interviewing is a process whereby research participants express their individual opinions about particular topics in the community being studied. It is a window to the participant’s individual subjectivity and yet collective belonging (Madison 2011, 28). Each participant may express similar or different thoughts, feelings, and judgments in response to particular questions. Whether the responses given by research participants greatly vary or not from one to another, the researcher should respect them all. Research participants are the people with whom researchers should not contradict and never disagree (Nettl 2005, 146). Failure to trust them will result in the researchers’ lack of intellectual security. Differences reflect the degree of the research

participants' understanding and authority. It becomes the responsibility of researchers to apply a critical perspective (Cohen 1993, 124-125).

Comparing and contrasting between some different opinions and thoughts are helpful to find similarities and differences. I always critically asked myself in what aspects these opinions and thoughts were similar, and in what aspects they were different, and how and why they differed.

I chose informal interviewing because it necessitates an equal and reciprocal relationship between me and my participants (Krüger 2009, 78). In informal interviewing the "distance" between the interviewer and interviewee is reduced. It turns from interviewing into more of a "friendly conversation" between two "friends." Based on my experience conducting such an interview, each could take several hours to hold compared to formal interviewing. In order to create a comfortable atmosphere for my interviewees, I usually opened the interview session with any general topic that sometimes had no connection with my research (e.g., interviewee's occupation, life, family or hobbies). Creating a comfortable and pleasant condition for both interviewer and interviewee is beneficial to my research. The more comfortable the atmosphere, the more the participants talked about their personal stories.

There are at least three things that a researcher should decide beforehand: 1) how to recruit participants; 2) how the interviewing will be conducted; and 3) where the interviewing will take place. Are they going to be recruited based on the information given by a central figure or from daily observation? Will research participants be interviewed as a group or individually? Will the interview take place in the participant's house or in a public space?

I decided to recruit participants mainly through observation. I was looking for two kinds of participants: 1) central figures, and 2) peripheral figures (Weiss 1995, 17). Central figures were

those uniquely informative because of their knowledge and skills about the music under study, whereas peripheral figures were those influenced by the music making. Central figures would help me understand the music making process, while peripheral figures would enrich my understanding about the music making from different perspectives and the musical context.

I did not use a specific type of informant (e.g., senior or junior musicians). Instead, I took advantage of a wide range of informants. The decision to use novice and expert musicians was significant to my learning process (Herndon and McLeod 1983, 67). From the truly gifted musicians, I learned how the musical style had developed and changed, whereas from the novices I learned about their problems and struggles in learning to play the *meko*.

Being an active participant led me to other key research participants: Reiner Eduart Therik, Pieter Sjoen, Lefinus Penu and Anderias Rui (East Rote); Nehemia Faah (Pantai Baru); Onasias Sodak (Central Rote); Chornelis Tuy (South Rote); Herman Ledoh, Godlief Eliasar Tungga, Elias Ledoh and Daud Selly (Northwest Rote); Jonas Mooy, Yusuf Mesah and Susana Lusi-Nggebu (Southwest Rote); and Esau Nalle (West Rote). Through these key research participants, in a process called a snowball effect (Goodman 1961), I was able to find additional research participants. For instance, Feoh recommended Godlief Eliasar Tungga and Frans Lau from the subdistrict of Northwest Rote, Jonas Mooy from the subdistrict of Southwest Rote, and Anderias Ruy from the subdistrict of East Rote; Esau Nalle referred Petrus Adoe from the subdistrict of Southwest Rote to me.

Information about key research participants also came from some random individuals I met at unexpected places, for example at motorcycle workshop or car wash. The people I met at these places would usually initiate the conversation by asking me questions like “Where do you come from?” “What do you do in Rote?” and “Why are you interested in conducting this research?” As

the conversation continued and became more intimate, they would be keen to provide any information related to *meko* music and playing.

In conducting the interviews, I acted in an ethical manner as guided by the ethics approval from the University of Otago. Those steps were as follows: 1) introducing myself to my research participants; 2) explaining my research project (i.e., research topic, research questions, research aims, research outcomes, types of research participants I sought and the rights of my research participants); 3) together with my research participant, we would find the date, time and venue for interviewing;¹⁸ 4) asking my research participants' approval/disapproval to participate in the research; and if they agree to participate I would ask them to sign the ethical consent form; and 5) asking my research participants who agree to participate in my research how they would like their names to be included in the dissertation (e.g., anonymous or identified).

Since participation in this research project was voluntary, on every visit I made to the house of my research participant for an interview I would usually carry a small gift bag containing areca nut, betel leaf, lime, tobacco and one to two liters of locally-made liquor known as *sopi* as a symbol of friendship. These gifts are relevant because in most places in the East Nusa Tenggara Province, betel chewing is perceived as a symbol of friendliness, familiarity and kinship (Nahak 1998, 7). It is a means to receive, to understand and to honor between the giver and the receiver. The giving of areca nut, betel leaf, lime and tobacco to the research participants can therefore be understood as a sign from the researcher to learn from the researched. Through chewing, the cultural gap between the outsider and the insiders is reduced.

¹⁸ To remind my research participant about the interview meeting, I usually would call my research participants one day before and on the day for the last minute confirmation. But it does not guarantee the meeting will happen. In my research case, I often experienced two to three times that the appointments were cancelled without any notice. During my field research in Rote, I learned that for some people, a set up appointment does not bind either the research participant or the researcher. It means that any of them can decline an appointment without any social consequences.

Betel chewing and alcohol drinking might be easy for some researchers to do, but for me it is problematic due to a regular medication for high blood pressure for the last seven years. On the one hand, I realized that through betel chewing and alcohol drinking the “distance” between myself and the researched might be reduced. On the other hand, practicing betel chewing and alcohol drinking might adversely affect my health, because they both produce an increase in heart rate and blood pressure (Chu 2001, 229).

Struggling with this dilemma, I finally found a compromised way to not to risk my health on the one hand, but also not to disrespect my research participants on the other hand. I participated in this chewing and drinking by taking a very small portion of betel and *sopi*, and, if possible, I tried not to consume any alcohol or betel. With some explanation, most of my research participants understood my situation and were not offended.

3.3.4. Learning to Perform

Mantle Hood (1960, 55) proposed the idea of gaining a certain playing skill by learning to play a musical instrument belonging to the community under study as a way to access the understanding of their whole concept. He talked about practicing ears, eyes, hands, and voice as beneficial and fundamental to our musical scholarship (Hood 1960, 55). He called this technique “bi-musicality” (having more than one “musicality”) as referring to bilingual (the ability to speak more than one language). Hood (1960) recognized the technical problem of using the word “bi-musicality,” because it refers to musical talent inherent in a person. In an attempt to solve Hood’s problem, John Baily (2008, 118) proposed the words “intermusability” (the ability to play more than one music) to supplant it.

Like Hood, A.M. Jones (1934) and John Blacking (1967) both argued that “learning to perform” was a good way to understand the music of the community under study. Jones (1934)

looked at “learning to perform” as a tool to understanding the apparent complexity of African music, while Blacking (1967) viewed “learning to perform” as a gradual step to learning the more complicated Venda music. Inspired by Hood, Jones and Blacking’s ideas about the significance of learning other’s instruments as a way to learn their musical cultures, Baily (2001, 93-96) took “learning to perform” to the next level, namely as a research technique. There are several reasons for that: 1) it is the best way to collect data from the insiders; 2) it provides crucial information about musical transmission; 3) it positions the status and role of a researcher in the community studied. “Learning to perform” explains the reasons why a researcher is in the field and what he/she is doing.

A plan to learn the *sasandu* with Theedens that was made in the pre-fieldwork phase had been cancelled. I decided to call off this initial plan because I wanted to begin my research in Rote immediately.

As the time went by, I also dropped my plan to learn *meko* playing in Rote. There are two reasons for this: 1) the learning and the performing of *meko* usually happens simultaneously, particularly during events, such as weddings, funerals, and community gatherings; 2) like *meko* playing which requires more than two players, *meko* learning also requires other performers to play along. In short, the learning will only be intelligible if it is placed in the context of collective playing.

Normally, traditional *meko* players do not hold regular rehearsals; they practice during the performance. *Meko* performance also becomes a place for beginners to learn the *meko*. Learners will usually listen attentively to the playing, try to memorize the sound of the specific gong they intend to play (in particular those with “simpler rhythms,” for example: the *meko ana* and the

meko leko), and practice it individually. Regular rehearsals only take place in schools or music and dance studios.

In general, playing *meko* requires five to seven performers.¹⁹ In contrast to *meko* playing, *sasandu* playing is more individualistic; therefore the one-on-one teaching style or the teacher-disciple tradition is applicable. I dropped my initial plan to learn *meko* playing individually because of this reason.

In order to get the basic idea of *meko* playing and music, I did learn the rhythms of the *meko ana*, *meko leko* and the *meko ina* of two familiar *meko* music pieces (i.e., *Tai Benu* and *Teo Renda*) from *ba'i* (the old man) Tobias Tungga. Tungga held my right hand and moved it according to the rhythms of *meko* played. Every time I forgot the rhythm, Tungga would repeat the procedure over and over. The learning process was quite quick for me because I transcribed all rhythms that I learned. *Ba'i* Tungga was sure if I learned this *meko* music intensively and seriously, I would be able to master all *meko* music pieces quickly.

At the end of this two-hour learning session, *ba'i* Tungga summarized his teaching as follows:

1. *Nggasa* and *tambur* are the most difficult instruments to learn, and only the best performers can play them;
2. Rice-pounding rhythms characterize *meko* playing;
3. In gong playing there are gongs that should be played muted (i.e., *meko ina taladak* and *meko nggasa laik*);

¹⁹ Bastian Mooy from Lalukoen Village demonstrated that *meko* could be played by three performers only.

4. Fast tempo does not mean that it has to be played very fast. The decision is made based on the dancers' movement. Accompaniment which is too fast will not be comfortable for the dancers.

3.3.5. Case Study

Some authors classify case study analysis as a qualitative research method along with phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and narrative analysis (Creswell 1998; Miller and Salkind 2002).

The case simply is “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (Miles and Huberman 1994, 25). Researchers utilize case study methodology as a research tool if they want to explore or to describe an event within its context using a variety of data sources (Yin 2003). Researchers use a variety of data sources in order to guarantee that the case or the issue is not examined through a single lens. Exploration that goes through multiple lenses will allow for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Baxter and Jack 2008, 544).

There are four considerations to be made if researchers want to use a case study approach: (1) the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions; (2) the behaviors of those involved are not manipulated; (3) the context is relevant to the event being studied; and (4) the boundaries between the event and the context are unclear (Yin 2003). Like research questions, the topic of a case study should be identified from the beginning. The best way to confine our case study approach is by placing boundaries on a case either bounded by (1) time and place; (2) time and activity; or (3) definition and context (Baxter and Jack 2008, 546).

The island of Rote was traditionally divided into eighteen *nusak*. These local domains are widely scattered throughout the island. Based on these facts, the use of a case study approach becomes possible, particularly when dealing with issues such as time constraints and a large area

of the island to cover. For the sake of my research on Rotenese *meko*, I planned to use case studies as a primary research technique (Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Merriam 2001; Yin 2003). A case study approach allowed me to gather information from different perspectives, locations or views using multiple cases, or a collective case study. Multiple cases are described and compared to provide insight into an issue (Stake 1995). My initial cases were the music making and the transmission of Rotenese *meko* on the island of Rote.

In planning the use of a case study approach, I focused my research design on the western parts of Rote (the sunset areas) based on my prior knowledge of the island and what had been suggested to me by a cultural insider. According to the information given by Ledoh through Lalay (personal communication 2014), four *nusak* in the West, namely, Ba'a, Dengka, Thie, and Oenale, have a stronger music tradition than in the East. These four *nusak* would be compared and contrasted with one another based on a designated case study and the following research questions: How is the *meko* conceptualized? How is *meko* playing sustained and maintained? It was expected that this research plan might change once I established my own knowledge of the island based on personal ethnographic experience.

Soon after arriving, I decided to drop the use of the case study method as a tool of data collection because the research was expanded throughout Rote. Instead of choosing a limited number of research participants or small geographical areas, I preferred to gain more varied information on *meko* music from a broader spectrum of research participants and wider areas. This decision was made as I observed that it was possible for me to reach all of my research locations in Rote by motorcycle.

3.4. The Post-Fieldwork Research

Completing the fieldwork is just part of the whole research process. Researchers have completed the “research” part and still have to finish the “writing” one. The outside world comprehends the story about the community being studied from the narrative written by the researcher. The narrative, then, is a story from the perspective of the researcher about the people with whom he or she has been working for months or years.

3.4.1. Data Analysis

Data is a collection of information gathered from interviewing, from participating in the social and musical activities, from observing what musicians and audiences do during a musical event, from personal communications, and from learning to perform the *sasandu* and *meko*. Data analysis is the next step the researchers do after completing their fieldwork. Data analysis is fundamental in research for it transforms the raw data into meaning(s).

Data analysis includes data coding, transforming and interpreting. Coding is a process of looking for issues or themes that stand out during the data gathering in the field (Madison 2011, 43). Coding is simply looking for meaningful units in the data. These units are considered meaningful because they occur frequently and are crucial to other units or, on the contrary, they occur rarely but are influential (Krüger 2009, 111).

Data transforming is a process of reading the raw data in order to generate a descriptive narrative, defining the origins of the data, and looking for meanings. The general aim of this phase is synthesis. Researchers are generating retrospective descriptions about the data (Krüger 2009, 116).

Data interpreting is a process of looking at the significance of research findings and conveying the meaning of data results (Krüger 2009, 119). Data interpreting goes beyond the

results. It requires researchers to identify how the study connects to the bodies of existing research or knowledge.

In the first trimester of my fieldwork I was looking for noticeable themes based on the raw data collected through interviews, personal communications and observations. Particular topics that stood out were highlighted, compared one to another, and interpreted. Finding themes was crucial to my research. Having specific themes would enable me to narrow down my research topic. I identified several themes in the fieldwork, for example: 1) the musical geography in *meko* playing between the eastern and the western part of Rote (Hilly 2015; Saudale 2015; Feoh 2015; Haning 2015a; Therik 2015; Sjoen 2015); 2) musical transmission and Western pop music as two factors that influence the sustainability of *meko* playing (Therik 2015; Sjoen 2015; Nalle 2015a; Pellando'u 2015); 3) a debate over the history of the *sasandu* and the *meko* led by two groups: a) those who assert that the *sasandu* predated the invention of *meko* (Ledoh 2015b; Mesah 2015; Faggidae 2015a), and b) those who are convinced that the *meko* was invented before the *sasandu* (Haning 2015d; Penu 2015; Mooy 2015; Lusi-Nggebu 2015; Nalle 2015a); and the controversy over the emergence of *seni garapan baru* (“new arts form”) (Ndolu 2015; Mooy 2016; Thonak 2016; Bako 2015b; Pah and Pah 2015).

The concept of dyad (pertaining to number two) that underpins the Rotenese organization of their world as introduced by Fox (1968) and Basile (2003) helps me understand the Rotenese *meko* structure and playing. Fox and Basile relate this dualistic symbolic classification system with the practice of Rotenese *bini*, but I adopted this concept and apply it to *meko* structure and playing. The application of this concept into *meko* structure and playing has made the information given by my research participants intelligible. For instance, the dyadic concept gives an explanation about the naming of *laik* (above) and *dae* (below), including how they are played.

Based on my research experience in Rote—from collecting to analyzing the data—I propose a research model for the study of Rotenese gong music. This research model includes existing literature and observations as crucial components to comprehend the whole stories as narrated by my research participants. Meanings are the result of raw data (i.e., interviews and personal communications) that have been interpreted through existing literature and observations. Fox’s dyadic concept enables me to convert the raw data into meanings.

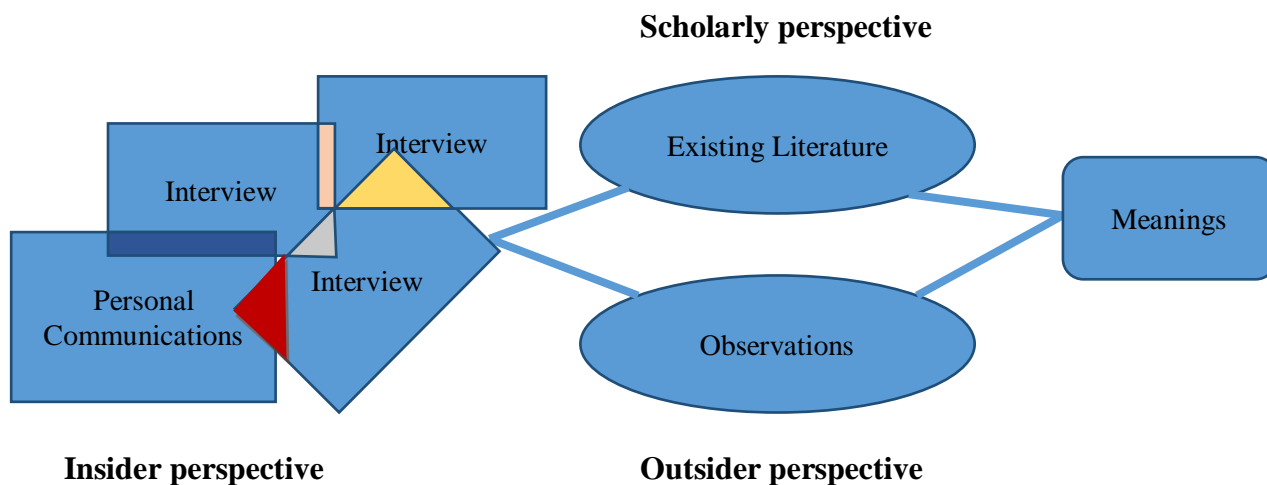


Figure 3.3. A Model for Ethnomusicological Research on *Meko* Music

In this research model raw data collected from interviews and personal communications are compared and contrasted with one another. Colored boxes show things they share in common (e.g., themes). Through existing literature and observations, these themes are interpreted in order to yield meanings.

3.4.2. Writing Up

Writing the report is the final phase of a research journey. The community and the wider audience are waiting for the report to come. The research report is not just the writing of research findings or telling the story about the people. It is a writing about research findings and its contribution to the larger bodies of knowledge. The research report should be meaningful not

only to the community being studied but also to broader readers. As Stock (2004, 31) asserts, researchers are not simply the mouthpiece of their participants; they have a responsibility to broader audiences (academia). How do researchers write up their report or narrative? Will their identity be revealed or not? How much voice should researchers give the community and to themselves? These questions belong to a term called positionality.

Positionality refers to how researchers will write up their cultural experiences. Fine (1994, 17) discusses three ways of representing the researchers' narrative: being a *ventriloquist*, *positional voice*, and *activist*. Would they speak on behalf of the community with unidentified identity (*ventriloquist*)? Or, would they speak on behalf of the community with notified presence but not addressed (the *positionality of voices*)? Or, would their presence and voices be clear (*activist*)?

As a researcher of Rotenese gong music, my narrative takes a position of activist. My presence as a researcher and cultural outsider was clear both during the research and throughout the writing. I came to the island as a foreigner who was interested in learning about Rotenese culture and *meko*, and my presence in Rote was acknowledged by the people. Based on fragmented pieces of information given by my research participants, I reconstructed the Rotenese understanding and sustainability of *meko*. It is like building a jigsaw puzzle to form a complete picture of the Rotenese music culture.

The term "activism" relates to "reflexivity." Reflexivity refers to the ability of researchers to "turn back" on themselves (Davies 2008). Reflexivity requires researchers to acknowledge their subjectivity and bias, yet attempt to be as critical and objective as possible. By being reflexive, their research meets the academic standards of paradigmatic, moral, and ethical issues (Madison 2011, 4).

The story about the Rotenese *meko* is presented as a narrative. It is not a fictional story about Rotenese people and their *meko*, but it is a story about these people gained from the insider perspective (*emic*) and interpreted through my perspective as a learning outsider (*etic*). I gained the insider perspectives by observing, actively taking part in their social and musical activities, from the interviewing and through personal communications.

In presenting this writing, this narrative will have the characteristics as listed by Madison (2011, 220-230): embracing, enacting, embodying, and effecting. To be embracing, the story should have a sense of welcoming or friendliness to its readers. To be enacting, the story should have a sense of evoking. It should have a power to help readers process the texts into meaning. To be embodying, the story should have something clear to say. Finally, to be effecting, the story should have a strong impact on its readers.

In order for the narrative to become comprehensible to the community being studied and the wider audience, I will provide the final writing in two languages (i.e., Indonesian and English). Copies of the Indonesian version will be stored in the public library of the Regency of Rote and the East Nusa Tenggara Province, while copies of the English version will be stored by The Department of Music, Theatre and Performing Arts and Central Library, Otago University.

3.5. Summary

A year of preparation for fieldwork (pre-fieldwork stage) was essential to the success of my research, but at the same time I acknowledged that the pre-fieldwork, however, is not the reality; it is an imagined reality. What I had planned during the pre-fieldwork stage was intended to anticipate any possibilities that I would possibly face in the field. In fact, not all I had planned and anticipated in the first stage could be implemented. I had to drop some plans (e.g., several short stays in the research participants' houses and a research technique known as learning to

play). I did not only change and adjust to what happened in the field, but I also had to find solutions for the dilemmas I encountered (e.g., betel chewing, *sopi* drinking, “*jam karet*,” and frequent power outages).

Fieldwork is a place where a researcher learns to adapt himself/herself to the cultural setting of the researched. Although, theoretically, it is the researchers who should have the flexibility and ability to adjust to cultural differences and new things, in fact the studied community also does some adjustment. The flexibility and ability to adjust to these issues will impact the potential success of their research. In my case, I had to be flexible particularly when dealing with appointments. A flexibility to adjust my “time” to the “local time” was also part of my research process to study the Rotenese culture comprehensively. I observed that the Rotenese have authority over time. They master their time.

Getting actively involved in the local community activities (in my case religious activities) has benefitted not only the Efata Timorese Evangelical Church but also myself as a researcher. My purpose to get involved in the Imanuel Choir of Efata church were: 1) to share the same faith as Christians; 2) to share my experience as a choral conductor and singer; and 3) to promote the quality of choral singing in that local church. As the relationship grew, some of the Imanuel choir members offered help in relation to my field research.

I observed that the contribution of the researchers (it depends on the researchers’ interests and skills) to the local community may benefit the researchers in the future. In my case in Rote, choral music became the gateway to develop a mutual trust and understanding between me and those researched. As the mutual trust develops between the researcher and the community studied, field research becomes more accessible to the researcher.

In the next chapter I will discuss the classification system of Rotenese musical instruments according to the system developed by Hornbostel and Sachs. The seven Rotenese musical instruments are as follows: 1) the wood or bamboo xylophone; 2) the hanging iron or brass gongs; 3) the iron or brass metallophone; 4) the single-headed, bowl-shaped drum; 5) the single-headed, long cylindrical drum; 6) the crash cymbals; and 7) the heterochord tube-zither.

Chapter 4 THE ORGANOLOGY OF ROTENESE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the physical aspects (e.g., the construction, the materials, the ways of playing and the size) of Rotenese musical instruments in accordance with the Hornbostel-Sach's classification system of musical instruments. The seven Rotenese musical instruments analyzed in this chapter are: 1) the *meko ai* (the wooden xylophone) or the *meko o* (the bamboo xylophone); 2) the *meko besik* (the hanging iron gongs) or the *meko lilok* (the hanging brass gongs);²⁰ 3) the *meko besik* (the iron metallophone) or the *meko lilok* (the brass metallophone); 4) the *labu kici* or the *labu so'e* (the single-headed, bowl-shaped drum); 5) the *tambur* or *labu* (the single-headed, long cylindrical drum); 6) the *bitala* (the crash cymbals); and 7) the *sasandu* (the heterochord tube-zither). These instruments are included in the discussion because they are still in use and part of *meko* playing.

The *kianuk*, the two-holed bamboo flute, approximately ten centimeters long, was the only blown instrument traditionally acknowledged by the Rotenese people in the past (Soh 2008a, 238). It is not discussed in this chapter because it does not exist anymore. The *sasandu* is included in this chapter because of its long association with the history and the playing of the *meko*. They both have much in common. For instance, the tuning of the lowest nine strings of the *sasandu* corresponds to the tuning of the nine *meko* gongs. They share a common repertoire; are accompanied by a *tambur* or *labu kici* (Basile 1998b, 799-800); and are used in connection with bereavement. The interrelatedness between the *meko* and the *sasandu* can be found in a Rotenese

²⁰ Both the Rotenese metal gong and the Rotenese metallophone are called the *meko besik* or the *meko lilok*. This naming has nothing to do with the shape of the instruments; rather it has to do with the material used in construction. *Besik*, for example, refers to "iron," while *lilok* refers to brass.

*bini/fini*²¹ saying as follows: “*Meko besi lahala lumata, sanduliti lalei pinuidu*” (Lau 2015). A free translation of this *bini* is: “The iron gong (the *meko besik*) proclaims distress, and the *sasandu* declares sadness.” According to this *bini*, both instruments are an expression of pain and sorrow.

Apart from the *sasandu* and the *meko*, the *tambur/labu* (the single headed stick percussion) and the *bitala/krintingan* (the small crash cymbals) are also discussed briefly in this chapter. The *tambur* is included in this chapter because it plays a significant role in *meko* playing. There is a saying that no *meko* playing happens without the existence of a *tambur* (Haning 2009e, 9). In contrast to the vital role of the *tambur*, the use of the *bitala* in *meko* music playing is optional. It is only used when the performers are sufficient, and livelier music is desired.

The Hornbostel-Sachs (H-S) classification system was chosen for two reasons: 1) it is worldwide used; and 2) It uses the Dewey Decimal System (DDS). For instance, the first number always refers to the main category of the instrument, and the following numbers classify the instrument in detail. Any instruments represented by numbers such as 1.1.1, are indirectly struck idiophones.

The DDS is also beneficial because of its exclusive use of figures that replaces the combination of numbers, letters and double letters. Further subdivision is by adding a new figure to the right end of the row (von Hornbostel and Sachs 1961, 10). The DDS allows us to pursue specification of any musical instrument without manipulating the numbers. The position of the

²¹ Rotenese do not use *bini* to communicate with their ancestors' spirits. This ritual language does not have any affiliation with religious or spiritual matters, but is used during formal interactions or ceremonies. It is distinct from everyday language (Fox 1971, 221). This ritual language is constituted by semantic elements, which are dyadic in nature. A short *bini* usually comprises seven sets of pairings, for example: “*bii*” – “*manu*” meaning “goat” – “cock,” and “*koa*” – “*pau*” meaning “tail feathers” – “beard” (Fox 1974, 73-74).

last figure shows to us the ranking of a given term with the system (von Hornbostel and Sachs 1961, 10).

Chapter Four classifies seven existing Rotenese musical instruments using the Western approach as developed by Hornbostel and Sachs; the next chapter (i.e., chapter five) discusses a Rotenese classification system of their musical instruments. These two classification systems differ one to another. The H-S classification system emphasizes the physical features of musical instruments, whereas the local understanding of Rotenese classification system bases its approach on the socio-cultural meaning of musical instruments.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: 1) Introduction; 2) Aims and Limitations; 3) Taxonomy of Rotenese Musical Instruments (divided into: a) Theoretical Background, and b) Taxonomy of Rotenese Musical Instruments); and 4) Summary.

4.2. Aims and Limitations

Classification is a means by which human beings comprehend the world of infinite variabilities in a simpler structure (cf. Tyler 1969). The aim of this chapter is to give a clear understanding about the affinities and differences of seven Rotenese musical instruments to other musical instruments across the world.

In the absence of a standard for *meko* making and tuning, providing exact information concerning the physical details of each instrument is challenging and limiting. For instance, the size, the material, the tuning of the *meko* and the *tambur*, and the note intervals (refer to Chapter 7 *Meko Music*) may vary from place to place, or from music studio to music studio. As a consequence, any information related to measurements that I present in this chapter is an approximation.

Herman Ledoh (informal conversation on November 25, 2017) mentioned four things that usually guide his *meko* tuning, i.e., mood; lowest vocal range; the tuning of other *sasandu* or *meko* which are considered good; and the thickness of its material. Quite similar to Herman Ledoh's explanation, Johannes Ledoh (Basile 2003, 59) states that *meko* tuning is a matter of finding a good note for the lowest gong which becomes a foundation for the next gongs. Although Herman Ledoh acknowledges the advantages of having a standardization of product, for instance, the possibility of building an orchestra consisting of some *meko* ensembles from different places, he is reluctant to attempt to establish it.

Spiller (2004, 66) observes a similar situation in Javanese gong making. The Javanese gong makers are reluctant to stick to a single standard both for pitch and interval. Instead, they strive for giving an idiosyncratic *slendro*²² or *pelog*²³ tuning to each set of *gamelan* instruments they produce.

Unlike Javanese or Balinese *karawitan*, the types of materials used for *meko* and *tambur* productions and the differences in size of the instruments will only affect the prices of the final products;²⁴ they have nothing to do with prestige and social level. For Rotenese musicians, their instruments are of secondary importance if compared to the function of music making itself. As Basile (2003, 81) argues on his study of the *sasandu*, "The Rotenese do not affirm the importance of the *sasandu* through displays or actions which can be observed, but through poetic images and tales which must be heard, deciphered and finally, understood."

²² The tuning system of the Javanese *gamelan* with five roughly equidistant intervals to the octave (Lindsay 1992, 72).

²³ The tuning system of the Javanese *gamelan* with seven uneven intervals to the octave (Lindsay 1992, 72).

²⁴ In an informal conversation with Ledoh on November 29, 2015, he implicitly explained that his products are mood-driven. Small and medium sized gongs are commonly found in the community, whereas large gongs are owned by nobility.

Regarding a great variety of tuning issues, I have decided to present all musical notations presented in this dissertation in the key of C. C major has been chosen because it is considered as the simplest key with no sharps and flats included. Using this key may at least ease the notational problem and in turn help readers to follow the discussion more easily.

4.3. Taxonomy of Rotenese Musical Instruments

4.3.1. Theoretical Background

The word “organology” was coined by a German musicologist, Michael Praetorius (1571-1621) in the second volume of his treatise *Syntagma Musicum* (1618), *De Organographia* (Dournon 1992, 245). Two and half centuries later, Victor-Charles Mahillon (1841-1924), the curator of the instrumental collection of the Brussels Conservatory, developed this study further by devising a classification system of musical instruments (*Catalogue analytique et descriptif du Musée Instrumental*) that might classify musical instruments from all time periods. Mahillon based his music classification system on the nature of instruments’ bodies and their relations to the sources of sound (Dournon 1992, 251). The Mahillon’s classification system was based on the four-fold ancient Indian system consisting of *Tut* (chordophones), *Bitut* (membraphones), *Ghun* (idiophones) and *Sooghur* (aerophones) (Jairazbhoy 1990, 70-71).

Being inspired by the Mahillon’s classification, Hornbostel and Sachs (1914), then, modified this system with three emphases: 1) the classification system is based on the existing musical instruments only; 2) the classification system is determined by the visible features of musical instruments; and 3) the numbering/ranking follows the DDS (Dournon 1992, 251). Hornbostel and Sachs criticize the Mahillon classification system that provides categories for non-existing musical instruments. Although the Mahillon system does not use the DDS, in a certain way is akin to the H-S system.

Similar to the Mahillon's, the H-S system also classifies the musical instruments into four main groups, namely: *idiophones* (sound produced by the vibration of the instrument's whole body), *membraphones* (sound produced by the vibration of stretched skin or membrane), *chordophones* (sound produced by the vibration of stretched string), and *aerophones* (sound produced by the vibration of an air column). Mahillon calls the idiophone, autophone.

Although the H-S classification system has been criticized by Jaap Kunst for the lack of consistent criteria for its subdivisions (Dournon 1992, 252), it remains the most popular classification system of musical instruments among museologists, organologists, musicologists, ethnomusicologists, and ethnologists around the world (Knight 2017, 1).

The classification system of musical instruments by Hornbostel and Sachs has been developed in more varied ways by certain scholars (e.g., Schaeffner in 1932; Dräger in 1947; Reinhard in 1960; Yamaguchi in 1969; Hood in 1971; Ramey in 1974; Sakurai in 1980; and Lysloff and Matson in 1985) (Kartomi 1990). In his classification system, Schaeffner proposes two primary categories, i.e., vibrating solid substances and vibrating air (Wachsman 2001, 420). Dräger devises his classification based on the musical and physiological functions of the instruments (Wachsman 2001, 421). Hood goes beyond the physical details of the instrument and establishes a “symbolic taxonomy”²⁵ (Wachsman 2001, 421). Tetsuo Sakurai modifies H-S classification scheme with the inclusion of primary resonators and secondary vibrators (Wachsman 2001, 421). René Lysloff and Jim Matson invents a “multidimensional scalogram analysis” graphic method consisting of thirty seven groups divided according to the source of sound, the material, the resonator, the supporting vibration, the sound instigator, the performer-instrument connection, the performance context, and so on (Wachsman 2001, 421).

²⁵ A taxonomy of musical instruments which is inspired by the symbolic language of dance and movement notation (Labanotation).

Although classification is just a small part of the entire study of musical instruments (organology), it becomes significant to the study of organology for it is a direct implication of human thinking (Kartomi 1990, 3). People classify to enable them locate things—in this case musical instruments—in places according to their affinities and differences. As Stephen Tyler (1969, 7) writes, that classification is an attempt made by human beings to view the world of infinite variability in a bearably manipulable size. Through classification the world of chaos is changed into the world of organized meaning.

4.3.2. The Hornbostel-Sachs Classification System of Rotenese Musical Instruments

4.3.2.1. The *Meko Ai/O*

The word “*meko*” was originally used as a reference to a wooden or bamboo xylophone, which looks very similar to the *kulintang a kayo* from the Philippines. The wooden xylophone is called the *meko ai*, while the bamboo xylophone is called the *meko o*. *Nitende* (*rhizophora sp*), *kula* (*vitex paviflora*) and *bina* (*mallotus repandus*) are the most common woods used in *meko ai* production. *Kula* and *bina* are considered less durable than teak, whereas *nitende* is the least highly regarded timber (Djony Theedens, personal communication on August 23, 2016). *Kula* is a hard and durable wood with a density of nine hundred thirty kg/m³. It resists fungus, termite and lyctus beetle attacks (Orwa et al. 2009). Therefore, *kula* is preferred by *meko* manufacturers.

The *meko ai* or the *meko o* is a xylophone comprising nine tuned bars made of wood or bamboo. The nine bars are tuned accordingly from the lowest to the highest as follows: E3 – G3 – A3 – C4 – D4 – E4 – G4 – A4 – C5. These nine tuned bars are strung horizontally on a wooden frame (*hako*).²⁶

²⁶ The term “*hako*” literally means “cattle trough.” Formerly, *meko* bars were seated in a cattle trough. Although wooden frame has replaced the cattle trough, the term “*hako*” is still in use to date.

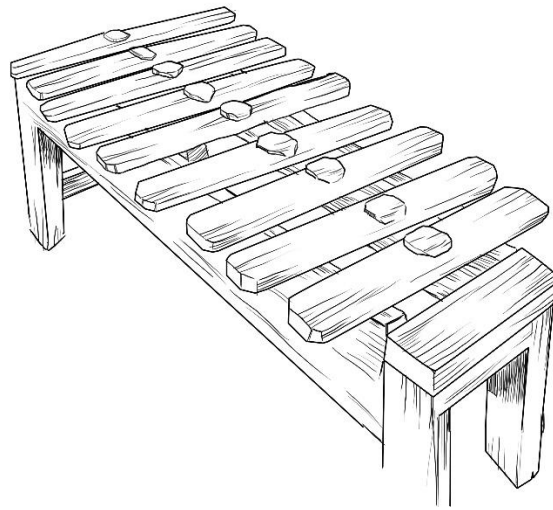


Figure 4.1. A *meko ai* (Rotenese wooden gong) (illustration by Galih Aulia)

The *meko ai* or *meko o* is played with one or two mangrove mallets. The *meko ai* or the *meko o* is usually played by two performers (see figure 4.2.). The first performer plays the five lowest notes (E3 to D4), and the second performer plays the last four highest notes (E4 to C5). Each performer holds a pair of mallets. If the *meko ai* is played by three performers, the first performer plays the five lowest notes (E3 – D4), the second performer plays the next three notes (E4 – A4), and the third performer plays the highest note (C5) (see figure 4.3.). The first and the second performers each holds two mallets, whereas the third performer holds a single mallet only. The performers usually sit on chairs or squat on the ground face-to-face. The dimensions of a *meko ai* range from about ninety to one hundred and ten centimeters long, from forty to sixty centimeters wide, and from forty to fifty centimeters high.

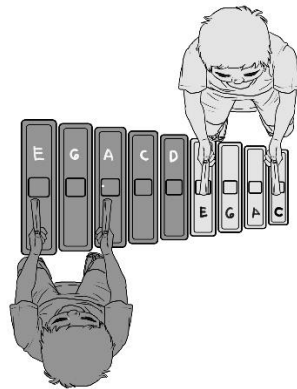


Figure 4.2. The seating arrangement for two *meko ai/o* performers (illustration by Galih Aulia)

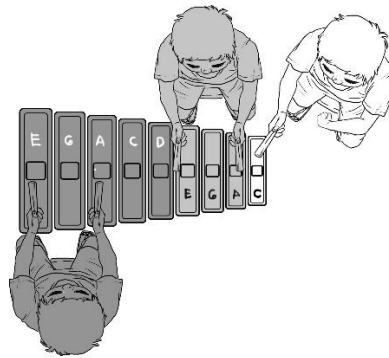


Figure 4.3. The seating arrangement for three *meko ai/o* performers (illustration by Galih Aulia)

According to the H-S system, the *meko ai/meko o* is classified as an idiophone with a set of percussion sticks in a range of different pitches combined into one instrument (111.212).

The Dewey Decimal System						Description
1						Idiophones
	1					Struck Idiophones
		1				Idiophones Struck Directly
			2			Percussion Idiophones
				1		Percussion Sticks
					2	Sets of Percussion Sticks

Figure 4.4. The H-S classification number for the *meko ai/o*

4.3.2.2. The *Meko Besik/Lilok*

Another type of *meko* is known as the *meko besik* (iron gong) or the *meko lilok* (brass gong). The *meko besik* or *lilok* is divided into two types: 1) the tuned knobbed metal bars suspended horizontally on a wooden frame; and 2) the hanging tuned knobbed metal gongs, which are suspended vertically on a wooden frame. Like the *meko ai* and the *meko o*, these two types of the *meko besik* also comprise nine tuned metal bars or gongs. A set of circular metal gongs may range from approximately fifteen centimeters (i.e., the *meko ana*, the smallest) to around thirty centimeters (i.e., the *meko ina makamu*, the largest) in diameter.

The Rotenese metallophone consisting of nine tuned knobbed metal bars is rarely available today.²⁷ This instrument has much in common with a Philippine *kulintang a tiniok*. They differ in: 1) the number of tuned metal bars used (i.e., the *Rotenese* metallophone comprises nine metal bars, while the *kulintang a tiniok* has eight pieces); and 2) the *kulintang a tiniok*'s metal plates are strung together with strings on a wooden rack (*antangan*), whereas the *meko besik*'s metal plates are just laid on top of a *hako*. This metallophone is made of bronze or brass. The

²⁷ During my field work on Rote, I was not able to find this instrument.

dimensions of this instrument are similar to those of *meko ai/o*. The technique of playing this *meko besik* is similar to that of *meko ai/o* playing.

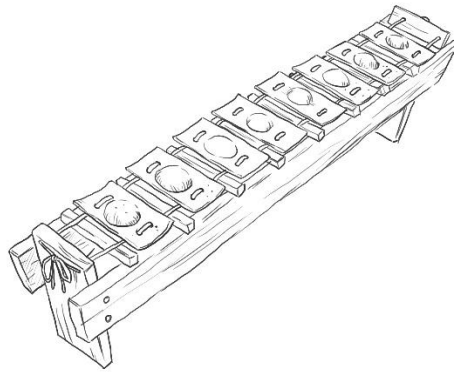


Figure 4.5. A *kulintang a tiniok* from the Philippines (illustration by Galih Aulia)

Following the H-S classification system of musical instruments, this metallophone is classified as an idiophone and more precisely as a set of percussion plaques (111.222).

The Dewey Decimal System						Description
1						Idiophones
	1					Struck Idiophones
		1				Idiophones Struck Directly
			2			Percussion Idiophones
				2		Percussion Plaques
					2	Sets of Percussion Plaques

Figure 4.6. The H-S classification number for the hanging *meko besik*

The tuned knobbed metal gongs are similar to a Philippine *gandingan*. Apart from their material and tuning, the number of gongs points out the difference between the *gandingan* and *meko besik*. The *gandingan* consists of four pieces of gongs, whereas the *meko besik* comprises nine pieces of gongs. Like the *gandingan*, the circular metal gongs are suspended vertically on a

solid wooden frame, tree trunks, or sometimes between two house posts by means of a cord. Previously, the gongs were suspended on bamboo rods or tree trunks put on the shoulders of two men.²⁸ The largest three gongs (i.e., the *meko ina makamu*, the *meko ina taladak* and the *meko ina tataik*), the *meko nggasa laik* and the *nggasa daek* are usually suspended vertically on a frame or a cord. The rest of the gongs are held in performers' hands. Since *meko* playing may last for several hours, most players prefer to sit while playing their instruments.

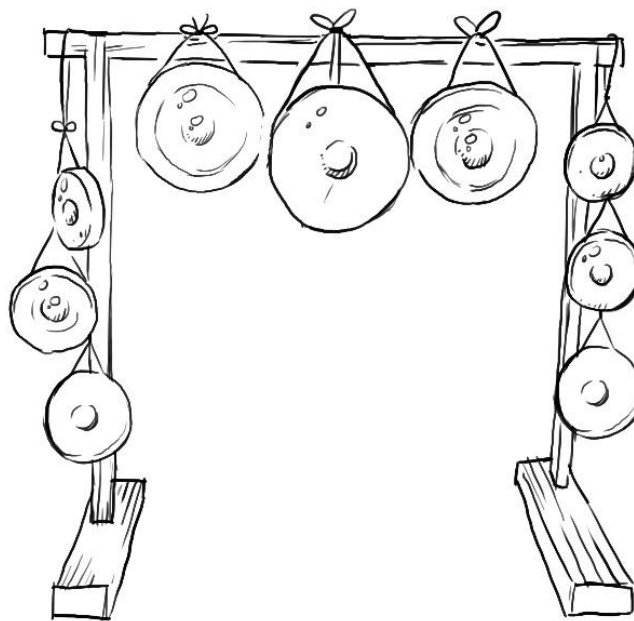


Figure 4.7. A set of hanging *meko besik* (illustration by Galih Aulia)

According to the H-S classification system, the tuned, knobbed metal gongs are registered under number 111.241.2 (Sets of Gongs [gong chimes]).

²⁸ Galvão (Reid 1993, 211) observed that to hang gongs on the wooden poles or the men's shoulders were commonly practiced by Javanese musicians on the beginning of the sixteenth century.

The Dewey Decimal System						Description
1						Idiophones
	1					Struck Idiophones
		1				Idiophones Struck Directly
			2			Percussion Idiophones
				4		Percussion Vessels
					1	Gongs
					2	Sets of Gongs

Figure 4.8. The H-S classification number for a set of hanging *meko besik*

4.3.2.3. The *Labu Kici* and the *Tambur*

The Rotenese people acknowledge two kinds of stick percussion instruments, which are used to provide a rhythmic accompaniment for *meko* and *sasandu* playing: 1) the *labu kici* (small *labu*) or the *labu so'e* (see Figure 4.9.), and 2) the *tambur* or the *labu* (see Figure 4.10.). The former is used to accompany *sasandu* playing,²⁹ while the latter accompanies *meko* playing.

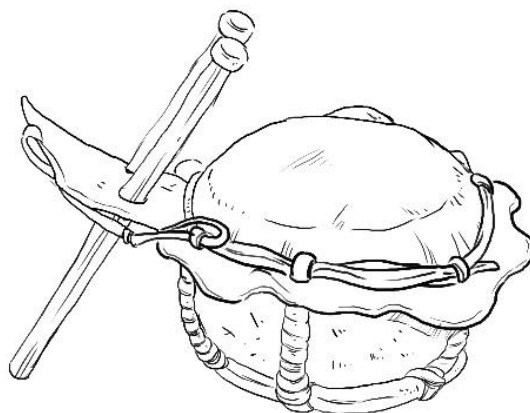


Figure 4.9. A *labu kici* (illustration by Galih Aulia)

²⁹ Another way to provide rhythmic accompaniment to *sasandu* music without using the *labu kici* is by tapping the *sasandu*'s *haik* using a small stick.



Figure 4.10. A *tambur* (illustration by Galih Aulia)

The *labu kici* is a coconut-shell drum played with two wooden sticks (the *labu aik*). The diameter of the *labu kici* ranges from about 20 to 25 centimeters. The *labu aik* is about one point 5 centimeters in diameter and 25centimeters in length. In the past, bat's skin was used for the *labu*'s drumhead (the *bamba bau ro*); later it was replaced by goatskin (the *bamba bau bibiru*) (Mooy 2015). The drumhead of the *labu kici* is stretched on leather strings, which can be tightened to change the pitch. The *labu kici* is held between the player's legs and is always played in a sitting position. The rhythms played on the *labu kici* are similar to those played on the *tambur*.

According to the H-S classification system, the *labu kici* is categorized as a directly-struck single-headed drum in which the body of the drum is bowl-shaped (211.11).

The Dewey Decimal System					Description
2					Membraphones
	1				Struck Membraphones
		1			Directly Struck Membraphones
			1		The Body of the Drum is Bowl-Shaped
				1	Single Instruments

Figure 4.11. The H-S classification number for the *labu kici*

The *tambur* is a Rotenese single-headed, long cylindrical drum, played with a pair of wooden sticks similar to that of the *labu kici*. The size of the *tambur* and the material used for constructing it may vary from one place to another. The *tambur* body was originally made of hollow coconut tree trunks, and was approximately forty to fifty centimeters high. In the last decade, fishing net floats have been used for the body of the *tambur*, supplanting the use of coconut trees. Recently, two-legged musical instrument stands made of metal have been installed on the body of the *tambur*. The drumhead uses the skin of a baby water buffalo, pony, pig or deer (Mesah 2015). Doeskin is preferred over other skins because it is thicker and longer-lasting (cf. Haning 2009e; Tuy 2015; Lido 2015). The diameter of the *tambur* ranges from about twenty to thirty centimeters. The *tambur* is held between the player's knees and is always played in a sitting position.

According to the H-S classification system, the *tambur* is classified under number 211.211.1, namely, an individual single-skin cylindrical drum.

The Dewey Decimal System							Description
2							Membraphones
	1						Struck Drums
		1					Drums Struck Directly
			2				Tubular Drums
				1			Cylindrical Drums
					1		Single-Skin Cylindrical Drums
						1	Open Cylindrical Drums

Figure 4.12. The H-S classification number for the *tambur/la'bu So'e*

4.3.2.4. The *Bitala* or the *Krintingan*

The *bitala* or the *krintingan* are a pair of small bossed, crash cymbals ranging from about 5 to 7 centimeters in diameter (see Figure 4.13.). The *bitala* is made of iron and is considered a non-pitched percussion instrument. Each cymbal comes with a finger strap. The player grasps the strap between his/her thumb and first finger. As mentioned earlier, the use of *bitala* in *meko* music playing is optional. If played in a *meko* ensemble, the *bitala*'s rhythm usually follows the *tambur*'s rhythm.

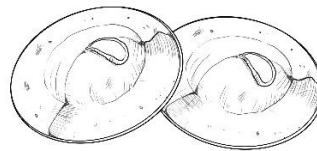


Figure 4.13. A *bitala/krintingan* (illustration by Galih Aulia)

According to the H-S system, the *bitala* is classified under the subcategory of vessel clappers with everted rims (111.142).

The Dewey Decimal System						Description
1						Idiophones
	1					Struck Idiophones
		1				Idiophones Struck Directly
			1			Concussion Idiophones or Clappers
				4		Concussion Vessels or Vessel Clappers
					2	Cymbals

Figure 4.14. The H-S classification number for the *bitala*

4.3.2.5. The *Sasandu*

The *sasandu*³⁰ is a Rotenese tube zither instrument with a resonator made of *lontar* (*Borassus sondaicus*) or palmyra palm leaves (*haik*). Its tube (*aon*, *sandu milak*) is made of a hollow piece of bamboo with a half-round lid or head called the *langga* and a foot called the *mea* or the *sandu iko* (tail). The *sasandu* ranges from about 6 to 8 centimeters in diameter, and 45 to 60 centimeters in height. Both the *langga* and the *mea* are made of wood. The *sasandu*'s strings are stretched from the tuning pegs (*aididipo*, *ndikodon*) on the *langga* to the the nails on the *mea*. The *aididipo* used to be made of wood, but later was replaced by metal screws.³¹ Each stretched string is supported by a movable wooden bridge (*senda*) placed on the surface of the *aon*. The *senda* serves as another tuner, particularly if the *sasandu* player desires to tune the pitch slightly higher or lower.

The adding of a unique resonator called the “*haik*” has distinguished the *sasandu* from its counterparts (e.g., the Malagasy *valiha*,³² the Cambodian *kong rla* or the Philippine *kolitong*). A flower-like crown (*koan*) attached to the top of the *haik* functions as an ornament to beautify the physical appearance of the *sasandu* so that it will be more appealing to its audience (Djony Theedens, personal communication on June 7, 2016).

³⁰ The word “*sandu*” or “*sanu*” means “to vibrate.” The *sasandu* or the *sasanu* is a short version of the “*sandu-sandu*” or the “*sanu-sanu* meaning” “to vibrate repeatedly”. The *sasandu* used to be called “*depo hitu*” (“seven strings”). This name appears in a poetic saying: “*Sari Sandu la dei depo hitu la dei*” (“to vibrate the instrument’s strings by scrubbing the fingers, and to pick the seven-string instrument by pressing the fingers on the strings”) (Haning 2009e, 14).

³¹ There is no exact date when this change happened.

³² Jermy Balukh (2013) argues that the Malagasy *valiha* was brought from Rote by the Dutch. The only difference is that the *Valiha* does not have a resonator made of *lontar* leaf (*haik*). There are two arguments concerning the meaning of the *valiha*. First, the word comes from a Sanskrit word “*Vadya*,” (“a sacred musical instrument”); second, it comes from Rotenese word “*Fali*” (“to return”) with “*ha*” as a calling to return to the homeland, that is, Rote. A Rotenese children’s song titled *Mai Fali E* meaning “come home” is a good example of how this word is used.

Formerly, the *sasandu* strings were made of the roots of the banyan tree (*Ficus benjamina*) and later was replaced by civet cat stomach (Haning 2009e, 11; Kartomi 1985, 54). Recently, motorcycle coupling wire strands and metal guitar strings³³ have become the most widely used materials for the *sasandu* strings. One of the reasons for this is because these two kinds of strings are easily available, especially in the capital city of West Timor, Kupang (approximately 110 km North of Ba'a, the capital city of the Rote Ndao Regency). On the island of Rote where metal guitar strings are scarcely available in shops, motorcycle coupling wire strands are preferred by local musicians. The rapid proliferation of motorcycle workshops in Rote has also significantly contributed to providing free unused motorcycle coupling wire strands for local musicians.

Jonireva Loloin (2015) asserts that in the past the *sasandu* were initially made out of wood instead of bamboo, and had three strings. This earliest *sasandu* was called *juk*.³⁴ King Foe Mbura from *nusak* Thie and King Ndi'i Hu'a from *nusak* Lole developed the initial form of the *sasandu*. Later, a *haik* was attached to the instrument, and the number of strings increased from three to seven. The newly-developed *juk* was called the *sasandu sambak*, *depo hitu* or the *deta hitu* (one pluck causes seven strings to vibrate simultaneously).

There are two kinds of the *sasandu*: traditional (see Figure 4.15.) and modern (see Figure 4.16.). The former is called the *sasandu gong*, as its tuning follows the *meko*'s scale: E3 (the *meko ina makamu*) – G3 (the *meko ina taladak*) – A3 (the *meko ina tataik*) – C4 (the *meko nggasa lai*) – D4 (the *meko nggasa dae*) – E4 (the *meko leko*) – G4 (the *meko paiseli*) – A4 (the

³³ In relation to the type of metal guitar strings used for the *sasandu biola*, there is no specific preference. As the *sasandu biola* has a wide range of pitches, for instance a 28-string *sasandu biola*'s range spans from G3 to E7, so it makes sense to use all six metal strings indiscriminately within an almost four-octave pitch range.

³⁴ Another term for "*juk*" is "*ukulele*" (Mananeke 2018, xiv). It is a small four-stringed guitar instrument, which originally was from Portuguese and brought to Hawai'i by the Madeiran immigrants in the late 19th Century (Walsh 2014). I think Loloin confuses between the *sasandu* and the ukulele.

meko paimali) – C5 (the *meko ana*).³⁵ The pentatonic *sasandu* or the *sasandu gong* is very popular among Rotenese musicians living on the island of Rote. The traditional *sasandu* is typically a solo instrument, which serves as an accompanying instrument, particularly to Rotenese traditional songs (*sodak*),³⁶ for instance, *Ofa Langga*, *Te'o Renda* and *Te'o Tonak*.



Figure 4.15. A *sasandu gong* (illustration by Galih Aulia)

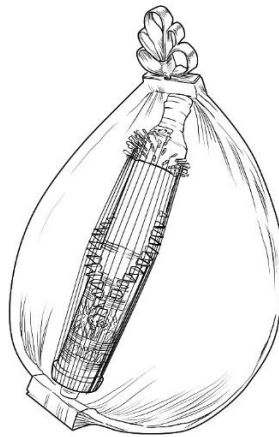


Figure 4.16. A *sasandu biola* / *sasando* (illustration by Galih Aulia)

The inventor of the modern *sasandu* is in question. Basile (2003, 51) suggests Paulus Mesak, a Rotenese musician, is the originator of the modern *sasandu*. Mesak created a *sasandu*

³⁵ Since no single tuning standard prevails, all musical notations within this dissertation will be written in the tonality of C major.

³⁶ Rotenese traditional songs consist of verse and refrain. The Rotenese poetic language known as *bini* appears in the verse, while the vernacular language is present in the refrain (cf. Basile 1998b).

capable of playing diatonic scales in response to a request made by a Dutch Minister (the date was unknown) who was looking for a Rotenese accompanying instrument for congregational singing. Haning (2009e, 18), however, asserts that the inventor of the modern *sasandu* was Cornelis Frans, a teacher from *nusak* Lole and an art teacher at the *School tot Opleiding Van Inlandse Leraren* (the Native Teacher's Training College) in the capital city of Rote Ndao Regency, Ba'a. According to Theedens (personal communication on June 9, 2016), the invention of the diatonic *sasandu* occurred at the end of the nineteenth century. He claims that his grandfather who lived during the late nineteenth century was a modern *sasandu* player. It is thus plausible that the diatonic *sasandu* was invented by Moluccan³⁷ teachers who came to Rote to teach. The transformation from pentatonic to diatonic Moluccan traditional gongs (*toto buang*) that occurred in Moluccas long before coming to Rote,³⁸ might explain this. Theedens (personal communication on June 9, 2016) assumes that this transformation was a result of a strong Dutch cultural influence on the Mollucan people. A desire to create a new musical instrument suitable for accompanying church hymns may have led them, as a diasporic community, to exercise the same practice in their new homeland.³⁹

There are two terms for the modern *sasandu*. The Rotenese call the diatonic *sasandu* “*sasandu biola*,” but in Kupang it is more commonly referred to as “*sasando*.” The term “*biola*”

³⁷ The Moluccas are an archipelago within Indonesia and located northeast of Timor and west of New Guinea.

³⁸ The exact date is unknown, but according to Alif Danya Munsyi (2005, 341) it was during the Dutch colonialism in Ambon (1602 – 1942). Rence Alfons (personal communication on September 5, 2016), a Moluccan traditional musician, asserts that the change has happened much earlier than that. He suggests that it possibly occurred during the Portuguese colonialism in Ambon (1511 – 1605). The fact that the *totobuang* and the *tifa* (a single-headed, cylindrical drum played with a pair of drum sticks) are musical instruments popular among Protestants, may eliminate the opinion that Portuguese and Spain were behind this change. The reason is that Portuguese and Spain have been associated with Catholicism, whereas the Netherlands have been associated with Protestantism.

³⁹ Haning's and Theedens's arguments are plausible because teaching is a respected profession on Rote, and teachers are associated with bringing changes into the community.

(violin) denotes that the instrument is tuned according to the Western diatonic system. There are two explanations for the etymology of the term “*sasando*.” First, a slight change in the pronunciation of the word “*sasandu*” to “*sasando*” possibly follows the Sasando Hotel in Kupang (Haning 2009e, 12). The misspelling of this hotel’s name has contributed to the misspelling of the musical instrument’s label in Kupang and its surrounding areas as well. In response to this misspelling, Theedens (personal communication on June 7, 2016) asserts that the word “*sasandu*” refers to the traditional musical instrument, while the word “*sasando*” refers to the modern *sasandu* (cf. Johnson 2003). Second, Theedens (2009b) attributes this misspelling to the Dawanese⁴⁰ dialect, which does not recognize the “u” vowel. In the Dawanese dialect, the word “Kupang” has become “Kopan,” and the word “*sasandu*” is pronounced as “*sasando*.”⁴¹

Recently, the modern *sasandu* has been modified with the addition of amplification, but the originator of the amplified variant of the *sasandu biola* remains in doubt. Haning (2009e, 19) argues that the electric *sasandu biola* was invented by Arnold Edon in the 1960s in order to modify the *sasandu biola* to suit Western pop music (Haning 2009e, 19). Basile (2003, 52) contends that the electric *sasandu biola* was created in 1980 by Edu Pah, a Rotenese musician living in Kupang. Edu Pah added a microphone inside his bamboo tube and connected it to an amplifier. According to Theedens (personal communication on September 5, 2016), the idea of having some amplification attached on the body of the *sasandu biola* was originally from Edu Pah. Pah always had a problem when he had to play the *sasandu* outdoors because the sound produced by an acoustic *sasandu* was too soft to be heard by the audience. It was Arnold Edon,

⁴⁰ An ethnic group of West Timor.

⁴¹ It is very likely that the Dawanese dialect has contributed to the spelling change from the word “*sasandu*” to the word “*sasando*.”

an adept craftsman with a strong knowledge of electronics, who brought the idea into reality.

Edon added an electronic spool to Pah's *sasandu*.

The *sasandu*'s embellishment is observable on the whole body of the *aon*. Patterns and designs used on the *sasandu* usually follow the motifs of Rotenese traditional fabrics, and are characterized by flowers, leaves and trees. The *sasandu* maker uses a knife or sharp nail to carve the motifs. The carved motifs are then colored using permanent markers. In order to keep the colored motifs from fading, they are coated with wood varnish. Theedens (personal communication on July 18, 2016) explains that there is no specific preference for one motif over another. These motifs are used to connect the instrument to its culture.

The *sasandu biola*'s strings may vary in number from 22 to 40. The more the number of strings, the more the number of notes altered.

- The 22-stringed *sasandu* consists of: G3 – C4 – D4 – E4 – F4 – G4 – A4 – B4 – C5 – D5 – E5 – F5 – F#5 – G5 – A5 – B5 – C6 – D6 – E6 – F6 – G6 – A6. F#5 becomes the only note altered by an accidental.
- The 28-stringed *sasandu biola* comprises: G3 – C4 – D4 – E4 – F4 – G4 – A4 – B4 – C5 – D5 – E5 – F5 – G5 – A5 – Bb5 – B5 – C6 – D6 – E6 – F6 – F#6 – G6 – A6 – Bb6 – B6 – C7 – D7 – E7. F#6 and Bb6 are the notes altered by accidentals.
- The 32-stringed *sasandu biola* is composed of: G3 – C4 – D4 – E4 – F4 – G4 – A4 – B4 – C5 – D5 – E5 – F5 – F#5 – G5 – G#5 – A5 – Bb5 – B5 – C6 – C#6 – D6 – E6 – F6 – F#6 – G6 – G#6 – A6 – Bb6 – B6 – C7 – D7 – E7. The seven notes altered by accidentals are: F#5, G#5, Bb5, C#6, F#6, G#6 and Bb6.

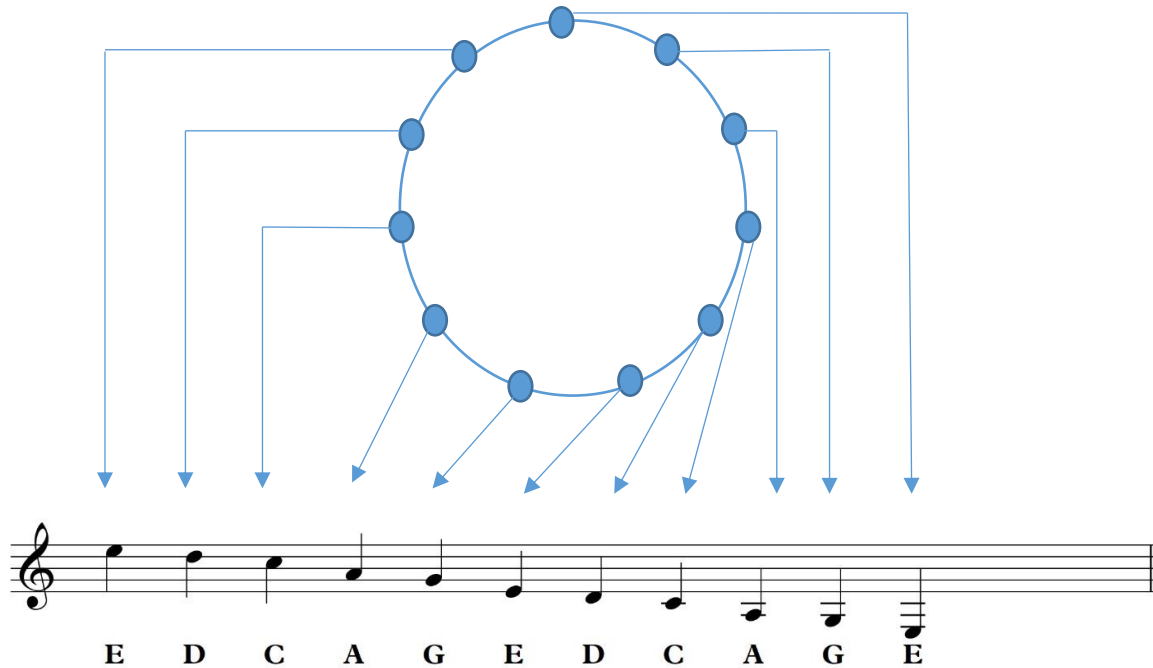
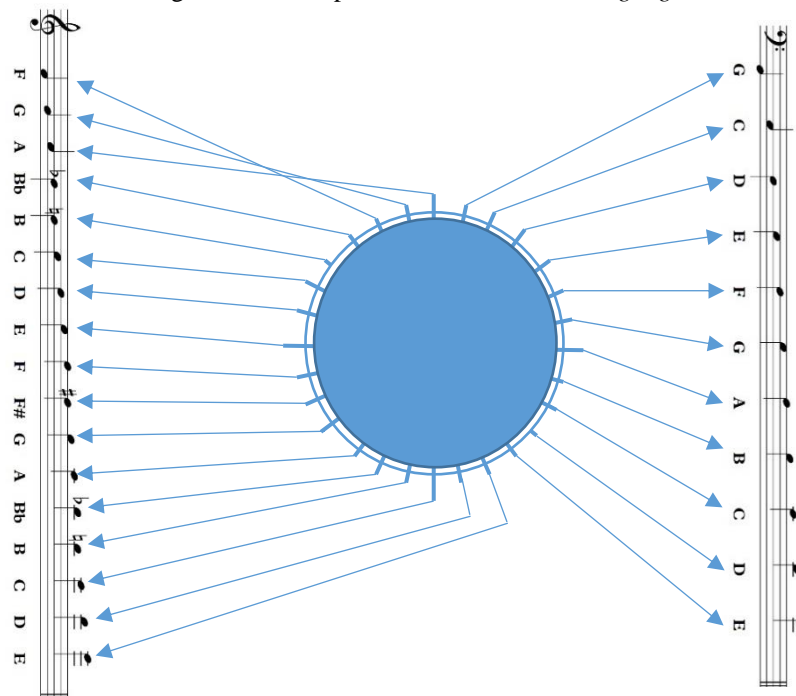
Concerning the relationship between the performer and the instrument, the *sasandu gong* is held between the player's knees and braced against the player's body. In order to control the

instrument, a contemporary *sasandu* is equipped with a neck strap made of *lontar* or, more recently, cloth or nylon. One end of the strap goes around the player's neck, while the other end is attached to the *langga*. Recently, the use of a solid metal stand for the *sasandu biola* and the amplified *sasandu biola* has enabled the performer to be less encumbered.

The *sasandu* strings are plucked using both left and right hands. These two hands play simultaneously with the same intensity and degree of difficulty. The right hand of the *sasandu*'s player plays the lower notes, and the left hand plays the higher ones. In general, the right hand plays the bass notes and chords, while the left hand plays the main melody.

With the *sasandu gong*, the right hand plays the first half of the scale moving from the bottom to the top (i.e., E3 – G3 – A3 – C4 – D4), and the left hand plays the rest of the notes from the top to the bottom (i.e., E4 – G4 – A4 – C5 – D5 – E5). Thus, the notes are ordered in a circular manner, starting from the bottom right of the circle, and proceeding in a counterclockwise direction (see figure 4.12.) similar to the *kora*, a West African harp-lute.

In contrast, the left-hand of the *sasandu biola* player moves in two different directions. The first three notes (i.e., F5, G5 and A5) are played downward, while the rest of the notes (i.e., Bb5 to E7) are played in an upward motion (see figure 13). The order of the *sasandu*'s strings is applicable to both right-handed and left-handed players (Theedens, personal communication on July 17, 2016).

Figure 4.17. The pitch order of the *sasandu gong*Figure 4.18. The pitch order of the twenty-eight-stringed *sasandu biola*

Sasandu gong players adopt an idiosyncratic technique known as “muted sound,” which is characteristic of *meko* playing. In *meko* playing there are seven gongs played unmuted and two

muted. The muted gongs are the *meko ina taladak* and the *meko nggasa laik*. The *sasandu* gong player imitates this technique by pressing his/her fingers onto the desired strings. In regard to muted and unmuted sounds, there are two opinions being given: 1) Therik (2015) says that muting is done primarily for the sake of aesthetics. The muted gongs create different sound color (timbre) from the unmuted ones. It is similar to the effect of staccato in Western music; 2) Penu (2015) has two opinions about the function of muted sound. First, it gives a signal for dancers to change movement and for players to keep the rhythm. Second, a muted sound is associated with a family drama. The muted sounds (the *meko ina taladak* and the *meko nggasa laik*) represent a mother and a father who are coaxing their unhappy child to stop crying. See Chapter Six for a more detailed discussion on the role of each gong in a *meko* ensemble.

According to the H-S classification system, the *sasandu* is classified as a chordophone (string instrument), and is sub-categorized as a heterochord tube zither with an attached resonator (*haik*). Following the H-S classification system, the *sasandu* is classified under number 312.122. The first three numbers refer to the source of the sound, the type of the instrument, and the arrangement of strings. The last three numbers refer to the type of the tube used, the strings played and the use of an extra resonator.

The Dewey Decimal System						Description
3						Chordophones
	1					Simple Chordophones or Zithers
		2				Tube Zithers
			1			Whole Tube Zithers
				2		Heterochord Tube Zithers
					2	With Extra Resonator

Figure 4.19. The H-S classification number for the *sasandu*

4.4. Summary

According to the H-S classification system of musical instruments the Rotenese traditional musical instruments can be classified as follows: 1) the wooden or bamboo xylophone consisting of nine tuned wooden or bamboo slabs (the *meko ai* or the *meko o*) is classified under number 111.212 (i.e., a set of percussion sticks in a range of different pitches combined into one instrument); 2) the metallophone consisting of nine tuned knobbed metal bars (the *meko besik* or the *meko lilok*) is classified under number 111.222 (i.e., a set of percussion plaques of different pitches are combined to form a single instrument); 3) the hanging gongs consisting of nine tuned knobbed gong pieces (the *meko besik* or the *meko lilok*) is classified under number 111.241.2 (i.e., a set of bossed gongs with circular discs made of metal); 4) the small crash cymbals (the *bitala* or the *kringtingan*) is classified under number 111.142 (vessel clappers with everted rims); 5) the small, bowl-shaped and single-headed drum (the *labu kici* or the *labu so'e*) is classified under number 211.11; 6) the long, cylindrical and single-headed drum (the *tambur* or the *labu*) is classified under number 211.211.1; 7) the tube zither with an attached resonator made of palm leaf (the *sasandu*) is classified under number 312.122 (i.e., a heterochord tube zither with an extra resonator); and 8) the two-holed bamboo flute (the *kianuk*). The *kianuk* is not discussed in this chapter since it has become culturally extinct.

In Chapter Five I discuss: 1) the socio-cultural meaning of Rotenese musical instruments, such as the significance and function of the instruments to its users, particularly in relation to the dyadic system; and 2) the proposed Rotenese classification system of their musical instruments.

Chapter 5 AN INSIDER UNDERSTANDING OF ROTENESE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

5.1. Introduction

Unlike the Chinese *pa yin* or the Indian classification system as written in a treatise on dramaturgy *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the Rotenese classification system of musical instruments is present as a concept in the minds of the Rotenese people. It is not explicitly articulated through conversation or even further clearly expressed in writings. It is a fluid concept that only occurs through music making.

To fill this gap—the physical absence of a Rotenese classification system of musical instruments—I begin my inquiry with two basic questions: 1) what are the functions of these musical instruments to the Rotenese people? 2) What is the significance of these musical instruments for the Rotenese? This approach to constructing a classification system of Rotenese musical instruments is known as an “ethnomusicology of musical instruments” (cf. Johnson 1995) or, according to Montagu (2003), “ethno-organology.” In contrast to Jeremy Montagu who emphasizes the benefits of learning “other” musical instruments in relation to “ours,” I use the terminology “ethno-organology” more as a study of musical instruments in relation to its cultural meaning in a researched community.

Considering musical instruments as meaningful material culture, a product of cultural processes, is a culturally relevant way of studying musical instruments. The Western classification systems of musical instruments (e.g., the Mahillon and the Hornbostel-Sachs classification systems) were formulated and developed according to the physical features of musical instruments. In contrast, an ethno-organological interpretation of musical instruments is

constructed according to the function and significance of the musical instruments in a community or from an individual perspective.

In connecting the function and significance of Rotenese musical instruments in the community, we can narrow the number of musical instruments down to two, namely, the *sasandu* and *meko*. Two other Rotenese musical instruments, the *bitala* and the *tambur* are able to be put aside as they both are complementary to *meko* or *sasandu* playing. In both *sasandu* and *meko* playing, the *bitala* is optional. Like the *bitala*, the *tambur* is optional in *sasandu* playing, and sometimes its function can be replaced by tapping the *sasandu*'s *haik* with a small stick.

This chapter is structured as follows: 1) Introduction; 2) Aims and Limitations; 3) Socio-cultural Aspects of *Meko* and *Sasandu*, which is divided into: a) Background; b) The Dyadic System in Relation to Rotenese Concepts of Parallelism and Complementarity; c) Terminology and Morphology of the *Sasandu* and the *Meko*; d) The Social Structure of *Meko*; 4) Constructing a "Rotenese" Classification of Musical Instruments is divided into: a) The Functions of the *Sasandu* and the *Meko*; and b) The significance of the *Sasandu* and the *Meko*; and 5) Summary.

The entire discussion in this chapter has been drawn from my ethnographic research, in particular through ethnographic participant observation and qualitative interviews. The structure of these discussions is guided by the Rice's tripartite model (1987) and my research questions. For example, the function of the *sasandu* and the *meko*, which is historically constructed; the character of the *sasandu* and the *meko*, which is socially maintained; and the attitude of the Rotenese people toward the *sasandu* and the *meko*, which is individually experienced, generate information required to construct a Rotenese classification of musical instruments.

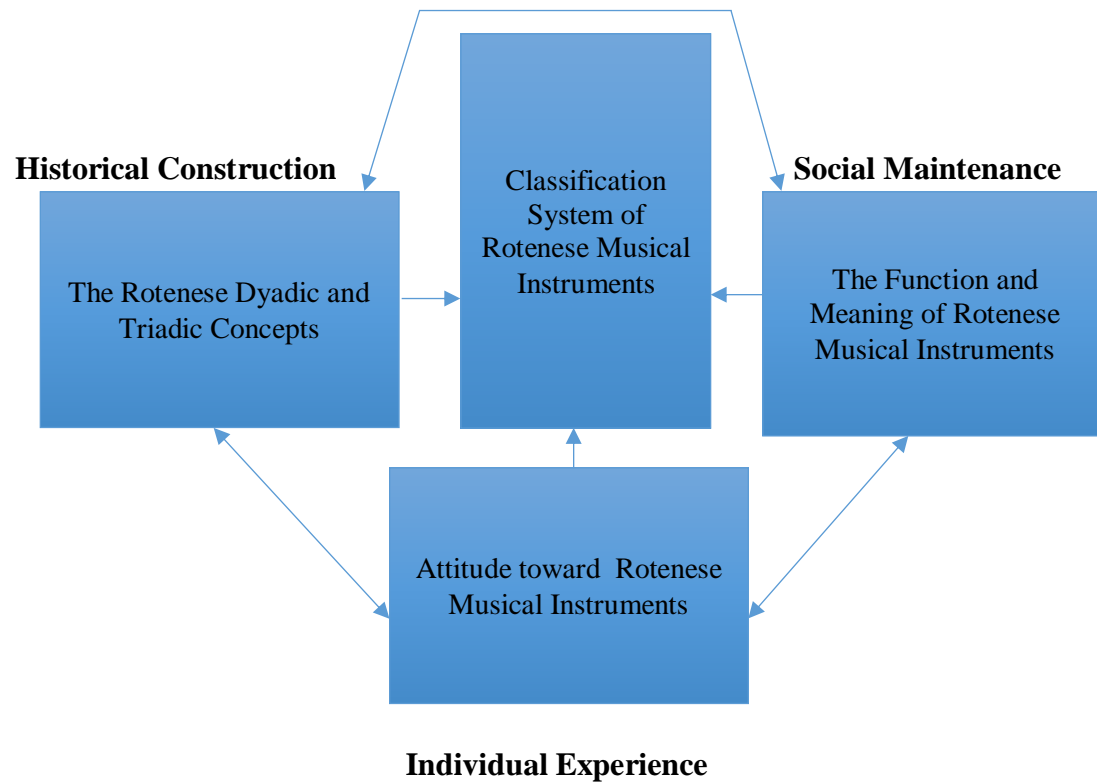


Figure 5.1. A model for ethnographic research on Rotenese classification system of musical instruments

5.2. Aims and Limitations

The aim of this chapter is to show that the Rotenese find further significance of their instruments in music making where they generate meaning that is specific to their cultural setting. For Rotenese musicians, the materials, construction, size and tuning of their instruments are of secondary importance when compared to the function of music making itself (see Basile in 4.2. *Aims and Limitations*). A writing by Keil (1987, 1995) on participatory discrepancies seems to fit this issue. According to Keil, (1987) the power of music is not in its syntax or structure but rather in its process and texture (275). In other words, Keil (1987) argues that to be meaningful (personally involving and socially valuable) music should be “out of tune” and “out of time” (275). I will discuss this further in subsection 5.4.2 The Significance of the *Sasandu* and the *Meko* to the Rotenese.

The fact that the Rotenese do not have a taxonomy of musical instruments, at least in the sense of an established taxonomy of musical instruments like that of Mahillon or Hornbostel and Sachs, is considered a limitation in this research. In his writing in *The Ethnomusicologist*, Mantle Hood (1971, 124) argues that only China, India and Western Europe have developed an established taxonomy for musical instruments. Hood's argument, then, implies that for other societies or ethnic groups, taxonomy might be a conceptual idea which is physically absent. Kartomi (1990, xvii) agrees with Hood that only certain cultures own their classification of musical instruments.

In my ethnomusicological study on Rotenese musical instruments, in particular the *meko*, the Rotenese classification system of musical instrument is not physically present. As an attempt to fill this gap, I will try to construct and present physically a local classification system of musical instruments based on insider views drawn from the interviews, personal communications as well as my ethnographic observation. In my case, the creation of the Rotenese classification system of musical instrument is in line with Kartomi's (1990) types of classification: 1) that emerges naturally from a culture; and 2) that is imposed by an observer for a specific purpose (16).

5.3. Socio-cultural Aspects of the *Meko* and the *Sasandu*

This section is comprised of two subsections: 1) background, including the ethnomusicological study of musical instruments, etic and emic perspectives; and 2) the understanding of dyadic system in relation to the Rotenese conceptual idea of parallelism and complementarity.

5.3.1. Background

5.3.1.1. The Ethnomusicological Study of Musical Instruments

A classification system of musical instruments based on the physical aspects of musical instruments (e.g., their origins, construction, shapes, tuning, playing techniques and, if available repertoires) were popular in the early stages of organological investigation. Mantle Hood (1971, 124) calls this study of musical instruments “organography”. Organologists perceived musical instruments merely as sound-producing instruments. From the physical details of musical instruments, an instrument builder, for example, could use this information as a guide to choosing appropriate materials for building musical instruments. For a music performer, this information might inform him or her about how the instrument was made, tuned and played in the past, and how it has developed over time.

Later, organology changed from investigating the physicality of musical instruments to investigating the socio-cultural meaning of musical instruments (e.g., the socio-cultural factors and local beliefs in relation to the use of musical instruments, and the status and training of the players in relation to its performance) (Dournon 1992, 247). It was the work of John Blacking (2000 [1974]) regarding the Venda people of South Africa that became a milestone in this shift. In his argument, Blacking (2000 [1974], 26) writes: “Because music is humanly organized sound, there ought to be a relationship between patterns of human organization and the patterns of sound produced as a result of human interaction.” In order to make a clear connection between musical instruments and the socio-cultural life of its users, Kevin Dawe (2012, 196) borrows Blacking’s argument, asserting that “if music and musical instruments are humanly organized sound, then the understanding of music as a representation of social life can also be applied to musical instruments as well.” In line with Dawe’s assertion, Jeff Todd Titon (2008, 30) argues

that a musical instrument is a socially-constructed phenomenon; it is an embodiment of the socio-cultural aspects of its users.

Information gained from social-cultural factors and local beliefs leads to what is called “ideal organology” (Dournon 1992, 249). Or, according to Johnson (1995), an approach to perceiving musical instruments as aspects of material culture, instead of sound-producing objects, is the ethnomusicological study of musical instruments. Montagu (2003) prefers to call it “ethno-organology.” In contrast to Jeremy Montagu who emphasizes the benefits of learning “other” musical instruments in relation to “ours,” I use the terminology “ethno-organology” more as a study of musical instruments in relation to their cultural meaning in a researched community. Such an understanding is in agreement with Johnson’s ethnomusicology of musical instruments. Ideal organology, the ethnomusicological study of musical instruments, or ethno-organology, connects musical instrument to the life of the researched society or community. Musical instruments, then, offer access to studying the thoughts, values, norms, and social structure of a musical culture.

5.3.1.2. Insider and Outsider Perspectives

The terms “etic” and “emic” were coined by a psychologist, Kenneth Pike (1967) in his attempt to describe human behavior. “Etic” was taken from “phonetic analysis” referring to the comparative study of languages; whereas “emic” was from “phonemic analysis” pertaining to unique structure of a particular language. Pike (1967) uses the word “etic” to describe the study of human behavior from outside the system. While the word “emic” is used to describe the study of human behavior from inside the system. Etic analysis discusses the general aspects of human behavior, whereas an emic analysis looks at the uniqueness of human behavior expressed in specific culture (Niblo and Jackson 2004, 127).

Etic (outsider) and emic (insider) perspectives became a major issue in ethnomusicological research from the 1970s to the 1980s (Nettl 1991). The dichotomy between insider and outsider perspectives has raised attention in different disciplines (Herndon 1993, 63). Ethnomusicologists were concerned about these two contrasting perspectives, in particular, how would the researched be represented ethically?

Bronislaw Malinowski was one of the first cultural anthropologists to employ emic perspective in his two-year research on the New Guinea Trobriand islands. He stated clearly that his intention as an ethnographer was to grasp the insider perspective⁴² (Malinowski 1922, 25). In order to understand the researched community's culture, Malinowski employed participant observation methods in his research.

A shift from etic to emic perspective has happened in organology as well. The first stage of organology or according to Hood (1971, 124), "organography" is a clear example of how the outsider perspective is imposed on musical instruments. The imposed etic approach is utilized because some researchers believe that certain methodology is applicable to any cultural setting (Niblo and Jackson 2004, 127). In fact, each cultural setting has its own variety and uniqueness. Therefore, Berry (1989) suggests researchers to find/construct "indigenous" methodology for specific culture studied. "Ethno-organology" is another way of classifying musical instruments through the insider perspective.

⁴² Malinowsky's claim has been criticized as a falsification because it is his own analysis and interpretation (Cohen 1993, 124).

5.3.2. The Dyadic System in Relation to Rotenese Concepts of Parallelism and Complementarity

Dualism or dual organization is very common to Indonesian societies (Kroef 1954), in particular to many Eastern Indonesian peoples, such as the Sumbanese (Hoskins 1998), the Timorese (Lazarowitz 1980) and the Florinese (Forth 2001). Scholars such as Claude Levy-Strauss (1949), Edmund R. Leach (1951), Jean Petrus Benyamin de Josselin De Jong (1952), D.M. Schneider and G.C. Homans (1955), and F.A.E. Wouden (1968) studied the dyadic system in relation to symmetrical and asymmetrical marriage in Indonesia.

Rotenese people organize their world (i.e., culturally, socially and politically) according to a dualistic symbolic classification system (Basile 2003, 46). The idea of dualism begins with a recognition among the Rotenese that there is a distinction between the concept of ideal world and reality⁴³ (Fox 1968, xiv): “*Tetu ta nai batu poi, tema ta nai dae bafok*” (“order is not of this world, perfection is not of this Earth”). Although there are five features of dualism in Eastern Indonesia: 1) parallelism, 2) recursive complementarity, 3) categorical asymmetry, 4) category reversal, and 5) analogical crossover (Fox 1989, 39), Fox (1968) focuses his study of Rotenese dualism on parallelism and complementarity, especially through the Rotenese vehicle for verbal prowess, namely, *bini*.

Rotenese oration occurs through *bini*, which are presented eloquently by a *manahelo* in balanced phrases at ceremonial occasions (Fox 1968, xvi). Formal oration, as discussed in Chapter Two, is very different from ordinary conversation (*kokolak*); it is an abstraction of conventional wisdom (Fox 1968, xiv). Ordinary conversation may or may not have a point to it,

⁴³ It is similar to Plato's theory of ideas that ideas represent the most accurate reality.

whereas *bini* always do. The following *bini* (Fox 1971, 236) may help us to understand the parallelism and complementarity of the Rotenese dyadic system:

<i>Soku-la Pinga Pasa</i>	They carry Pinga Pasa,
<i>Ma ifa-la Söe Leli</i>	And they lift Söe Leli.
<i>De ana sao Kolik Faenama</i>	She marries Kolik Faenama,
<i>Ma tu Bunak Tunulama</i>	And weds Bunak Tunulama.

The word “carry” is parallel to “lift,” as “marries” is to “weds.” Pinga Pasa is parallel to Söe Leli. The name Pasa/Leli from Pinga Pasa / Söe Leli is the ritual name pointing to an area on the north coast of *nusak* Termanu (currently the subdistrict of Central Rote). Pinga Pasa / Söe Leli refers to a woman’s name. Whereas Kolik Faenama is parallel to Bunak Tunulama. The name Kolik/Buna from Kolik Faenama / Bunak Tunulama is a ritual name referring to *nusak* Termanu/Pa’da as a whole. Kolik Faenama / Bunak Tunulama refers to a man’s name. Thus, Pinga Pasa / Söe Leli is a name of a woman who is supposed to come from the North. Pinga Pasa / Söe Leli marries Kolik Faenama / Bunak Tunulama, a man who is supposed to come from the South. A man coming from the South (*kona*) is complemented by a woman coming from the North (*ki*). A man is paired with a woman, as south is coupled with north. The idea of complementarity is clearly expressed in the following aphorism: “*Ina tai tou ma tou tai ina*,” meaning “a woman depends on a man, and a man depends on a woman” (Haning 2009a, 131).

Complementarity also denotes superiority and inferiority. For instance, *kona* (south) is superior to *ki* (north), and *dulu* (east) is superior to *muli* (west). *Kona* is superior to *ki* because it is associated with knowledge, whereas *ki* is associated with ignorance. This also applies to the right and left hands. The right hand (*lima malelak*) is considered as “the knowing hand,” whereas the left hand (*lima nggoa*) is considered as “the ignorant hand” (Fox 1968, xvii). Shaking hands or giving something to someone using the left hand is considered impolite by the Rotenese.

Therefore, Rotenese children are taught, from their childhood, to know the differences between

the right and the left hands. To be accused of being ignorant in the context of Rote is far worse than being accused of theft (Fox 1968, xvii). *Dulu* is considered superior to *muli* because the Sun (*ledo*) comes from the East, as sunrise is superior to sunset. The Sun has been associated with man (*tou/mane*), power, and white (*fula*). In regard to the superiority of the East, the Rotenese possess an aphorism that explains this relation: “*Dulu nalu muli, tehu ledo neme dulu mai, de dulu beü lena muli*” (“the East and the West are broad, but since the Sun comes from the East, the East is, therefore, considered greater than the West”) (Fox 1968, 42).

In relation to complementarity and superiority, the Rotenese system of classification acknowledges several categories. These include: 1) numbers, 2) cardinal directions, 3) parts of the body, 4) colors, 5) coordinates, and 6) types of metals. Odd numbers such as one (*esa*), three (*telu*), five (*lima*), seven (*pitu*) and nine (*sio*) are superior to even numbers, such as two (*dua/lua/rua*), four (*ha*), six (*ne*), and eight (*fulu*).

In the dyadic system, even numbers are always paired with odd numbers. For example, *Tema Sion do Bate Falun*, meaning the ninth perfection or the eighth layer, refers to heaven. *Ndolu sio do lela fulu*, meaning the ninth peacefulness and the eighth prosperity, refers to human beings.⁴⁴ Another example is *Teluk-Ama Lailona* (Three-Father [who] suspends the Heavens) is coupled with *Hak-Ama Mepedae* (Four-Father [who] maintains the Earth) (Fox 1968, xxviii). Unlike Fox, Adoe (2013, 13) calls the Three-Father God, *Teluk Aman Londa Lai*, and the Four-Father God, *Hak Aman Lepa Dae*. The God of Heaven is represented by number three, whereas the God of the Earth is represented by number four. Three is superior to four, as Heaven is superior to Earth. In the case of even numbers being used in association with a term, for instance the use of *fulu* in the word *fulu ina* (widow) or *fulu ama* (widower), it denotes an imperfect life

⁴⁴ Since both are metaphors, no further explanation is required.

because the number is divisible by two and nothing is left over (Nalle 2015b). Odd numbers may also be associated with a particular term. For instance, *sio* in the words *manesio* (a brave, intelligent, charismatic and wise Rotenese traditional leader, who was appointed by the king) (Adoe 2013, 55), *Lakamola anan sio* (a big garden which is planted with nine varieties of plants) (Adoe 2013, 24) and *pule/mbulek sio* (nine seeds). The word *pule sio* is also associated with woman as the life giver. The Rotenese regard *sio* as the symbol of perfection and continuity. In summary, even numbers are associated with imperfection or with something from the Earth, whereas odd numbers are associated with perfection or with something from the ideal world (Heaven).

In regard to colors, the Rotenese differentiate between bright and dark colors. White (*fula*) is associated with the Sun; it is the color of health and well-being. Black (*nggeo*) pertains to death and the ancestral spirits. Red (*pilas*) denotes the blood of an elder brother; blue, green and yellow (*modo*) are colors associated with witchcraft and sorcery. Therefore, *fula* is superior to *nggeo*, as *pilas* is superior to *modo* (Fox 1968, 45). Interestingly, red, green and black are dominant colors used to decorate the body of the *sasandu*.

The head and the tail belong to the parts of the body category. The Rotenese think of their island as having its head (*langga*) in the East and its tail (*iko*) in the West. *Langga* is always associated with authority as to *dulu* is with precedence. Because of this, *langga* is superior to *iko*. Coordinates comprise of above (*lai*), below (*dae*), inside (*dale*) and outside (*dea*). *Lai* is superior to *dae*, as *dale* is superior to *dea*. *Lai* refers to Heaven, while *dae* refers to Earth. The ritual name for heaven is *Lain do Poin* and the ritual name for earth is *Dae Bafok do Batu Poi*. The superiority of Heaven to Earth is expressed in an aphorism as follows: “*Lain loa Dae, Dae loa Lai, te hu Manetua nai Lain, do Lain loa lena Dae*” (Heaven and Earth are broad, but since God

is in Heaven, Heaven, then, is broader than the Earth) (Fox 1971, 47). Heaven is greater than the Earth because the great Lord resides in heaven.

Traditionally, Rotenese acknowledge four kinds of metals: silver (*lilo fulak*/white gold), gold (*lilo pilas*), copper (*liti*), and lead (*engge nggeok*). *Lilo fulak* is superior to *engge nggeok*, as *lilo pilas* is superior to *liti*. Again in deciding which metals are superior from the other, the Rotenese always make their decision on the basis of color. Bright colors are superior to dark ones.

Apart from the dyadic system, Rotenese also acknowledge triads. If the dyadic system refers to parallelism and complementarity, triads denote a hierarchy based on wealth, privilege and ultimate authority (Fox 1971, xv). For instance, the hierarchy of a Rotenese family consists of a man/husband/father (*tou*), a woman/wife/mother (*feto*) and a child (or children) (*ana*). A man is positioned in the center of the family structure and flanked by his wife on the right and his child (or children) on the left. Being placed in the center (*dale*), a Rotenese man/husband/father has authority over his wife and his children. A man/husband/father in the center (*dale*) is superior to his wife and his child(ren), who are on both sides (*dea*). A woman/mother is superior to her children because of her position; a mother is placed on the right side (*kona*), while her children are on the left side (*ki*). The hierarchical structure of a Rotenese family is in agreement with an old traditional norm that is still in practice today: “*Tou Manek Ina Kakana*,” meaning man as a king with a woman, who is almost equal to a child (The Office of Culture and Tourism 2014b). A Rotenese wife is supposed to prepare and serve the food for her husband. She will eat after her husband finishes his food (Soh 2008b, 48). A husband receives special treatment from his wife because he is the one who works hard for his family (“*mana tungga sangga*,” meaning “a man who is looking for something”) (Soh 2008b, 49).

Prior to analyzing the structure of *meko* in accordance with Rotenese understandings of the dyadic and triadic systems, I will describe the etymology and morphology of the *sasandu* and the *meko*.

5.3.3. Terminology and Morphology of the *Sasandu* and the *Meko*

There has been some ethnomusicological research on the topic of symbolic meaning in relation to musical instruments that is especially relevant for comparison with my own research. For instance, Anthony Seeger (1975) discusses mouth and ear ornaments of the Suyu Indians of Central Brazil in association with the symbolic importance of “speaking” and “hearing.” Steven Feld (1983) talks about the *gisalo* (ceremony or song) structure of the Kaluli in connection with the organizational representation of the *Muni* bird. Steven Cornelius (1990) studies male/female polarities and kinship relationships of the New York Santeros, which are represented through drum ornaments and playing. Regula Qureshi (1997, 2000) studies the Indian *sarangi* and discusses some issues built around the instrument (e.g., gender, power, emotion and feeling). Finally, Kevin Dawe (2001) discusses the body of the lyra as a representation of “the man.” In short, musical instruments bear values and meaning.

In general the information about the physicality of the *sasandu* and *meko* has been discussed in detail in Chapter Four. In the next subsection, I will relate the terminology and morphology of these two Rotenese instruments to the Rotenese dyadic and triadic concepts.

5.3.3.1. Terminology and Morphology of the *Sasandu*

The *sasandu*, a Rotenese string tube-zither with resonator made of *lontar* leaves, has been embedded with symbolic meaning. The adding of a *haik* (a bucket-like resonator made of *lontar* leaves) to the *sasandu* has been argued as an attempt to associate the musical instrument to the *lontar* tree or the tree of life (see Soh 2008a; Haning 2009c; Adoe 2013). The shape of *sasandu*’s

resonator is also similar to the *haik*, a *lontar* bucket used by the Rotenese for collecting *lontar* juice/water. *Lontar*, juice and water all are associated with “life.” In this context, the adding of *haik* to the *sasandu* is simply to emphasize this correlation (cf. Cornelius 1990).

Lontar or Boraissus Sundaicus, popularly known as palmyra palm, has been considered by the Rotenese as the tree of life. Another name for *lontar* is *tua(k)*, meaning “great or majestic,” while *Mane Tua Lain* or *Lamatuak Lain*, meaning “the great man who owns Heaven,” has been used to address the God in Christianity. The *lontar* has been linked with God as the life-giver. In this context, *lontar* is the symbol of God’s providence over the Rotenese. The Rotenese use most parts of the *lontar* tree (e.g., *lontar* leaves, stems, juice, and trunks) for everyday life. A Rotenese family would put the placenta of their newborn baby in a container made of *lontar* leaves (*kapisak*) and hang it on a *nggainunak* tree.⁴⁵ A Rotenese newborn baby would be exposed first to the *lontar* juice just prior to being breastfed by its mother. The *lontar* juice is considered a substitute for milk. When the Rotenese die, their bodies are placed into a coffin made of a *lontar* trunk tree.

Speaking of the morphology of a *sasandu*, it consists of a *langga* (head), *aon* or *sandu milak* (body) and *mea* (foot) or *sandu iko* (tail). The *langga*, the *aon* and the *mea* of the *sasandu* can be interpreted as the anthropomorphic depiction of human beings which could be found in some Indonesian traditional musical instruments, for example, the gamelan from Cirebon (DeVale 1977) and Bali (DeVale and Dibia 1991). *Haik* (palmyra palm leaves) as previously discussed is added in order to connect the ideal world (Heaven) with the world of reality (Earth). *Lamatuak Lain* who owns Heaven protects His creatures which are represented by the *langga*, the *aon* and the *mea*. While the *koan* (a flower-like crown) attached to the top of the *haik* has

⁴⁵ *Nggainunak* fruits produce sap, which was previously used as glue. Once, the tree skin was used in the healing of bone fractures. Unfortunately, the Indonesian name for this tree is unknown.

metaphorical purpose that is to appeal both to ears and eyes of its audience (cf. DeVale and Dibia 1991, 10).

5.3.3.2. Terminology and Morphology of the *Meko*

Although there has been some debate around the number of *lalanggak meko esa*, for instance, ten according to Tuy (2015), Ledoh (2015b) and Haning (2015d); or eleven according to Nalle (2015b) and Pellando'u (2015); eventually, nine has become the standard number of Rotenese gongs. This is unsurprising, as nine has become a number associated with perfection, continuity and sustainability. The *meko* as sound-producing instruments and material culture metaphorically represents perfection, continuity and sustainability of Rotenese culture (cf. Kartomi 1990).

Gong Names	Meaning	Commentary
The <i>meko ina</i> / the <i>mai makamu</i> (in the dialects of the western and the central parts of Rote), or the <i>meko ine tena</i> (in the dialect of <i>nusak Dengka</i>), or the <i>meko ina kona</i> and the <i>meko ina maho</i> (in the dialect of the eastern part of Rote)	<i>Ina, mai</i> and <i>Ine</i> all mean 'mother' <i>Makamu, tena</i> and <i>maho</i> all denote 'the largest, or the heaviest, or the lowest one' <i>Kona</i> means "right" or "south"	Low mi
The <i>meko ina taladak</i> (found in most dialects in Rote), or the <i>meko ine kelada</i> (in the dialect of <i>nusak Dengka</i>)	<i>Taladak</i> and <i>kelada</i> both mean "in the middle/center"	Low la
The <i>meko ina tataik</i> (in the dialect of the western and the central parts of Rote), or the <i>meko ina muli</i> (in the dialect of <i>nusak Lole</i>), or the <i>meko odamatak</i> (in the dialect of <i>nusak Talae</i>), or the <i>meko ina ki</i> and the <i>meko ina suuk</i> (in the dialect of the eastern part of Rote)	<i>Tataik</i> and <i>suuk</i> means "on the side" <i>Muli</i> means "west" <i>Odamatak</i> means "in the front" <i>Ki</i> means "north" or "left"	Low sol

The <i>meko nggasa lai</i> (in the dialect of the western and the central parts of Rote), or the <i>meko nggasa ata'</i> (in the dialect of <i>nusak Dengka</i>), or the <i>meko kasa</i> (in the dialect of the eastern part of Rote)	None of my research participants know precisely the original meaning of <i>nggasa</i> or <i>kasa</i> . Basile (2003, 56) defines the words <i>nggasa</i> or <i>kasa</i> as “tone.” If we refer to the history of <i>meko</i> coming to Rote, it is more plausible to suggest that the words <i>nggasa</i> or <i>kasa</i> are Javanese word for “bronze” or “ <i>gamelan</i> ” (see Haryono 2009). <i>Lai</i> and <i>ata'</i> both mean “high”	Middle do
The <i>meko nggasa dae</i> (in the dialect of the western and the central parts of Rote), or the <i>meko nggasa lae'</i> (in the dialect of <i>nusak Dengka</i>), or the <i>meko kasa dae</i> (in the dialect of eastern part of Rote)	<i>Dae</i> and <i>lae'</i> both mean “low”	Middle re
The <i>meko leko lai</i> (in the dialect of the western and central parts of Rote), or the <i>meko leko ata'</i> (in the dialect of <i>nusak Dengka</i>), or the <i>meko kasa lai</i> (in the dialect of the eastern part of Rote)	The meaning of <i>leko</i> is debatable. Penu (2015) defines the <i>leko</i> as “to soothe,” Tuy (2015) as “to initiate,” and Manafe (2015) as “to call”	Middle mi
The <i>meo leko dae</i> or the <i>meko paiseli</i> (found in most dialects in Rote), or the <i>meko leko lae'</i> (in the dialect of <i>nusak Dengka</i>), or the <i>meko paselu</i> (in the dialect of <i>nusak Lole</i>)		Middle sol
The <i>meko ana lai</i> or the <i>meko paimali</i> (found in most dialects in Rote), the <i>meko ana ata'</i> (in the dialect of <i>nusak Dengka</i>), or the <i>meko ana paselu</i> (in the dialect of <i>nusak Lole</i>), or <i>ana tiik</i> (in the dialect of the eastern part of Rote)	<i>Ana</i> means “child”	Middle la
The <i>meko ana daek</i> (found in most dialects in Rote), the <i>meko ana lae'</i> (in the dialect of <i>nusak Dengka</i>), or the <i>meko ana tootiik</i> (in the dialect of <i>nusak Lole</i>), or the <i>meko ana totook</i> (in the dialect of <i>nusak Talae</i>), or the <i>meko ana do'o dea</i> (in the dialect of <i>nusak Termanu</i>), or the <i>meko ana took</i> (in the dialect of the eastern part of Rote)		High do

Figure 5.2. The structure of the *meko*

In contrast to the morphology of the *sasandu*, which is fully embedded with symbols, the morphology of the *meko* is modest and unpolished. *Haik* is not attached to the body of the *meko*. No connection between the tree of life and the *meko* is made. Although the *meko* does not bear any symbols in its morphology, the dyadic and triadic concepts that underlie the Rotenese social organization are found in the arrangement of gongs. For instance, the six smaller gongs (i.e., the *meko nggasa*, *meko leko*, and the *meko ana*) in a *meko langgak esa* are in pairs, while the lowest three gongs (i.e., the *meko ina makamu*, the *meko ina tataik*, and the *meko ina taladak*) come as a triad. These groupings clearly reflect the idea of dyad and triad.

The *meko nggasa lai* precedes the *meko nggasa dae*; the *meko leko lai* precedes the *meko leko dae* (*paiseli*); and the *meko ana lai* (*paimali*) precedes the *meko ana daek*. For the Rotenese *lai* is represented by low frequency, whereas *dae* is represented by high frequency (Basile 2003, 57). Low frequency refers to male adults, while high frequency refers to children. Men are superior to children as the low voice is superior to the high voice. This superiority becomes clear in *meko* playing if each pair is played by a single player, the lower-pitched *gong* will be suspended above the higher one. By doing this the player demonstrates the superiority of the *meko lai* over the *meko dae*. In the wood xylophone (the *meko ai*) the wood tuned slabs are arranged accordingly from right to left (from lowest to the highest pitches), instead from left to right as we find in most musical instruments. In such an arrangement the *meko lai* now are positioned higher than the *meko dae*. *Kona* is associated with *langga*, whereas *ki* is associated with *iko*. This reverse order also indicates the importance of each *gong*. The three lowest *gongs* grouped as the *meko ina* become the most important ones as they are placed on the far right of the *meko* set. As the order moves to the left, the *gongs* become less important.

If the *meko nggasa lai* and the *meko nggasa dae*, the *meko leko lai* and the *meko leko dae*, the *meko ana lai* and the *meko ana dae* come in pairs; the *meko ina makamu*, the *meko ina tataik* and the *meko ina taladak* are grouped as a triad. If the dyadic system symbolizes parallelism, complementarity, and superiority; the triadic system symbolizes hierarchy. The *meko ina makamu* sits on the right, the *meko ina taladak* sits in the center, and the *meko tataik* sits on the left. The *meko ina makamu* is associated with *kona*, the *meko ina taladak* is associated with *dale*, and the *meko ina tataik* is associated with *ki*. *Dale* is superior to *dea*, as *konak* is superior to *ki*. It clearly explains why in *meko* playing the *meko ina taladak* always becomes the primary focus for musicians and dancers. The *tambur* player, for instance, will always listen to the sound of the *meko ina taladak* as a sign for coming in. The dancers listen to the sound of the *meko ina taladak* as a sign for changing their movement.

In a *meko ina* group, the *meko ina makamu* becomes the second important *gong* after the *meko ina taladak*. Since the *meko ina makamu* is placed on the right (*kona*), it is superior to the *meko ina tataik*, which sits on the left (*ki*). In *meko* playing, the *meko ina makamu* is played after the *meko ina taladak*. The most common order of *meko ina* playing is as follows: the *meko ina taladak* – the *meko ina makamu* – the *meko ina taladak* – the *meko ina tataik* – the *meko ina taladak*. The *meko ina taladak* serves as a pivot.

5.3.4. The Social Structure of the *Meko*

As shown by DeVale and Dibia (1991, 41), associating individual instruments with members of a family or society is quite a common practice in most Indonesian traditional music, in particular Javanese and Balinese *karawitan*. We can find the same practice in Rotenese gong music. In regard to social structuring of the *meko*, there are at least two contrasting stances. The first group consisting of Eduart Therik and Samuel Manafe relates the structure of a *meko*

langgak esa to Rotenese traditional government. The second group comprising Lefinus Penu, Yusuf Mesah and Susana Lusi associates the structure of a *meko langgak esa* with a Rotenese familial structure.

The first group argues that the structure of the *meko* is a representation of Rotenese traditional government. For instance, Therik (2015) from the subdistrict of East Rote associates each *gong* in a *lalanggak esa* with a king (*manek*), a queen (*ina lai*) and child(ren) (*ana*); a vice king (*fetor*); a head of a subvillage (*temukung*); commoners (*lau inggu*); and an intercessor (*manasonggo*).

The hierarchy of the Rotenese traditional government	The names of the <i>gongs</i>
<i>Manek</i> <i>Ina lai</i> <i>Ana</i>	<i>Meko ina taladak</i> <i>Meko ina makamu</i> <i>Meko ina tataik</i>
<i>Fetor</i>	<i>Meko nggasa lai</i> and <i>meko nggasa dae</i>
<i>Temukung</i>	<i>Meko leko lai</i> and <i>meko leko dae</i>
<i>Lau inggu</i>	<i>Meko ana laik</i> and <i>meko ana dae</i>

Figure 5.3. The social structure of the *meko* according to Eduart Therik (2015)

The *tambur* represents an intercessor (the *manasonggo*). Although *manek* is the top of this governmental hierarchy, he has to listen to a *manasonggo*. A *manasonggo* does not belong to this political structure, but he has the authority not owned by the king, that is to communicate with gods. He, therefore, is considered higher than the *manek*. This model applies to the social structure of the *meko*. The three *meko ina*, associated with the *manek*, are the most important *gongs* in a *meko langgak esa*, but they have to listen to the *tambur*. As a Rotenese aphorism says: “There is no *meko* music-making without the presence of a *tambur*.” In regard to the significant role played by a *tambur* performer, Tuy (2015) mentions two tasks carried out by a *tambur* performer: 1) to ascertain that each performer has played his instruments correctly; and 2) to

signal when the music ends. Therefore, a *tambur* player is normally the best and the most knowledgeable musician in a *meko* ensemble.

Unlike Therik, Samuel Manafe (2015) argues that the *manek* is represented by the *meko leko* instead of the *meko ina*. Manafe does not include the *fetor* in his argument because in fact, a *fetor* is just a symbolic office who owns no authority (Adeo 2013, 59). In Manafe's theory, the *meko nggasa* represents the *temukung*, the *meko ina* represents the *manaleo* (a tribal chief). Like Therik, Manafe associates the *meko ana* with the *lau inggu*, and the *tambur* with the *manasonggo*:

The hierarchy of the Rotenese traditional government	The names of the gongs
<i>Manek</i>	<i>Meko leko lai</i> and <i>meko leko dae</i>
<i>Temukung</i>	<i>Meko nggasa lai</i> and <i>meko nggasa dae</i>
<i>Manaleo</i>	<i>Meko ina taladak</i> , <i>meko ina makamu</i> and <i>meko ina tataik</i>
<i>Lau inggu</i>	<i>Meko ana lai</i> and <i>meko ana dae</i>

Figure 5.4. The social structure of the *meko* according to Samuel Manafe (2015)

There are differences and similarities between Therik's and Manafe's arguments. They differ particularly in discussing the three lowest groups within a *meko* set, namely the *meko ina*, the *meko nggasa* and the *meko leko*. However, they both agree when it comes to associating the two highest gong pairs and the *tambur*. It is likely that Therik departs from the assumption that the lower the sound, the greater the authority. Whereas, Manafe's argument is based on the understanding that initiative relates to authority, or in other words, authority yields initiative. In fact, most of *meko* music repertory normally starts either with the *meko nggasa* (e.g., *Kaka*, *Kakamusu*, *Kaka Filandak*, *Li Mbembelek*, *Enggalutu*, *Sakalitiana*) or the *meko leko* (e.g., *Bobouk Dae*, *Te'o Tona*, *Te'o Renda*, *Mudipapa*, *Li Oehandi*, *Li Ledi Tua*, *Li Dadape*).

Unlike the first group, the second group prefers to associate the social structure of *meko* with the Rotenese family model, in particular, an extended family consisting of parents, grandparents, uncle and aunt, and children. For instance, Susana Lusi-Nggebu (2015) from Batutua Village in the subdistrict of Southwest Rote correlates the social structure of the *meko* with the Rotenese nuclear family consisting of two biological parents and two children. The *meko ina* represents the mother (*ina*), the *meko nggasak* represents the father (*ama*), the *meko leko* represents the older child (*ama lasik*), and the *meko ana* represents the younger child (*ana mulik*). The only person who does not belong to this nuclear family, the grandfather, is represented by the *tambur*.

Lusi-Nggebu places the mother as the foundation for Rotenese family because the mother is the final decision maker in a family. Although a husband is called the “*tou manek*,” meaning “man’s king,” within a family/domestic setting, a wife is the decision maker. This reminds us of the same issue occurring during the Industrial Revolution in Europe and North America, known as “separate spheres”—an ideology that defines and determines the women’s and men’s spheres. Women’s authority in the home relates to what is known as the “proper” sphere of women (Ross 2006, 228), whereas men’s authority is in the public domain. In other words, in the house, women are central and men are peripheral.

Lusi-Nggebu’s argument is in line with *meko* playing. Most of the time, the *nggasa* comes first and is followed by the *meko ina* right before the *tambur* joins. If the *nggasa* represents a father coming with initiative and idea, it is the mother who will make the final decision.

The hierarchy of Rotenese familial structure	The names of the <i>gongs</i>
The <i>ina</i>	The <i>meko ina taladak</i> , the <i>meko ina makamu</i> and the <i>meko ina tataik</i>
The <i>ama</i>	The <i>meko nggasa lai</i> and the <i>meko nggasa dae</i>
The <i>ana lasik</i>	The <i>meko leko lai</i> and the <i>meko leko dae</i>
The <i>ana mulik</i>	The <i>meko ana lai</i> and the <i>meko ana dae</i>

Figure 5.5. The social structure of the *meko* according to Susana Lusi-Nggebu (2015)

Lefinus Penu's (2015) concept of the social structure of the *meko* is in agreement with that of Lusi-Nggebu. The only difference is that Penu associates *meko* playing with family drama. In this musical drama the *meko leko* becomes the main character. The drama began with the older child, represented by the *meko leko*, who was crying because his heart was grieving. All family members had tried various ways to calm him down, but no one succeeded, until his grandfather came and consoled his heart, and eventually he stopped crying.

The hierarchy of Rotenese familial structure	The names of the <i>gongs</i>
The <i>ina</i>	The <i>meko ina taladak</i> , the <i>meko ina makamu</i> and the <i>meko ina tataik</i>
The <i>ama</i>	The <i>meko nggasa lai</i> and the <i>meko nggasa dae</i>
The <i>ana lasik</i>	The <i>meko leko lai</i> and the <i>meko leko dae</i>
The <i>ana mulik</i>	The <i>meko ana lai</i> and the <i>meko ana dae</i>

Figure 5.6. The social structure of the *meko* according to Lefinus Penu (2015)

Unlike Lusi-Nggebu and Penu, Yusuf Mesah (2015) associates the *meko* structure with the Rotenese extended family model consisting of grandparents, parents, uncles and aunts, children, and a *manaleo*. The *meko ina* represents grandparents (*ba'i* and *bei*), the *meko nggasa* represents parents (*ama* and *ina*), the *meko leko* represents uncles (*to'o*) and aunts (*te'o*), the *meko ana* represents children, and the *tambur* represents the *manaleo*.

In Mesah's concept, grandparents are the primary source for family guides. Parents' responsibility is to direct their children by giving good instructions. Uncles and aunts are initiators in the family. The *manaleo* becomes the most trusted person to give a solution whenever problems come (Mesah 2015). There are some roles played by a *manaleo*, some of them are: 1) to protect his clan members from any danger; 2) to unify his clan members; 3) to resolve conflict within and without his clan; 4) to uphold and to preserve the clan's cultural values; and 5) to listen to the aspiration of the clan's members (Haning 2013b, 120-121).

The hierarchy of Rotenese familial structure	The names of the gongs
The <i>ba'i</i> and the <i>bei</i>	The <i>meko leko lai</i> and the <i>meko leko dae</i>
The <i>ama</i> and the <i>ina</i>	The <i>meko nggasa lai</i> and the <i>meko nggasa dae</i>
The <i>to'o</i> and the <i>te'o</i>	The <i>meko ina taladak</i> , <i>meko ina makamu</i> and the <i>meko ina tataik</i>
The <i>ana</i>	The <i>meko ana lai</i> and the <i>meko ana dae</i>

Figure 5.7. The social structure of the *meko* according to Yusuf Mesah (2015)

5.4. Constructing a “Rotenese” Classification System of Musical Instruments

The Rotenese do not have a written classification system of their own musical instruments like the Chinese *ba yin* (eight sounds) consisting of musical instruments made of metal, stone, skin, vegetable gourd, bamboo, wood, silk and earth (Wade 2004, 35); or the Indian classification system classified based on character types in drama and physical positions in love making (Wade 2004, 37). The absence of a highly complex, formalized classification system in the Rotenese community does not mean that a system does not exist. It does exist as a conceptual idea. The classification system of “Rotenese” musical instruments that I am going to propose in this section purely is my own interpretation based on insiders views and my ethnographic observations. I have also acknowledged the possibility that this classification system might be

unacceptable to my research participants because the “Rotenese Classification System” is just an idea.

5.4.1. The Functions of the *Sasandu* and the *Meko*

Regarding the function played by the *sasandu* and *meko*, both are played in Rotenese ritual settings. Formerly, the *meko* served as a signaling instrument for the community informing that something important was taking a place, for example deaths, funerals, weddings or even emergency situations such as fires, natural disasters and theft (cf. Sjoen 2015; Lusi-Nggebu 2015; Lau 2015; Tuy 2015). In the case of someone’s death, the smallest *meko* (the *meko ana*) was played to announce that a girl or a boy had just passed away. The largest one (the *meko ina*) referred to the death of an adult. In this context, the *meko*’s role as an event signaler cannot be substituted by the *sasandu*. For this reason the *meko* is considered more important than the *sasandu*.

5.4.2. The Significance of the *Sasandu* and the *Meko* to the Rotenese

Before I discuss the significance of the *sasandu* and *meko* to the Rotenese, it is essential to define the difference between the terms “meaning” and “significance.” According to the Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (1999, 720), the word “meaning” can be understood as “the thing one intends to convey.” Whereas, the word “significance” can be defined as “something that is conveyed as a meaning often obscurely or indirectly” (Merriam-Webster 1999, 1091). Because these two words share much in common, I use them interchangeably throughout this chapter. Briefly, the word “meaning” also means “significance.”

In fact, the cultural symbol attached to the body of the *sasandu*, for example through the use of *haik*, has nothing to do with the meaning of the instrument for the Rotenese. In contrast, in the plain and humble *meko* Rotenese people find its meaning. Or to borrow DeVale’s (cf.

DeVale and Dibia 1991, 7) statement: “Thus, in its simplicity, Sekar Anyar⁴⁶ serves as a clear model for a first exploration of meaning in *gamelan* through the design of its instruments.” This shows a contrasting understanding of instruments’ meaning in relation to the cultural symbols embedded in instruments through ornaments as discussed by Seeger (1975), Qureshi (1997, 2000) and Dawe (2001).

In response to the meaning of these two Rotenese musical instruments, Frans Lau (2015), a *manaleo* and a *manahelo* from *kampong* Ndaou, Toalima village in the subdistrict of Northwest Rote, explains that the *sasandu* is a reduced version of the *meko*. The number of *meko* players, which are five to seven people, has been cut down to one player. As a consequence, the collectivistic character of *meko* has been replaced by the individualistic nature of the *sasandu*. Like Lau, Johan Christian Malelak (2015) from Daleholu Village in the subdistrict of South Rote argues that the *meko* is collective in nature, reflecting good organizational principles; while the *sasandu*, on the other hand, is an instrument which is individualistic in nature. Both Lau and Malelak emphasize the meaning of the *meko* in its collectivist nature.

Lau’s and Malelak’s argument departs from the fact that Rote is an agricultural island. According to the data provided by the Rote Ndao Sensus Bureau (2014, 52), seventy-two percent of the Rotenese work either as farmers, lontar tappers, fishermen, or breeders; and only twenty-eight percent work in industries, such as mining, manufacturing, electricity, gas and water supply; and in the sectors, such as trading, transportation, financing and services. Therefore, in the context of agricultural community, collectivism is considered more important than individualism. Living united as a community becomes pivotal for the Rotenese, as expressed in

⁴⁶ A name of the first set of *gamelan Gong Kebyar* which was brought first to the United States by Ki Mantle Hood in 1991.

the following aphorism: “*ama bua-bua busa bua, ma ama mao-mao manu mao*,” meaning “to be united like a mother dog with its puppies and mother hen with its chicks” (Adoe 2013, v).

Significance is more closely associated with collectivism as opposed to individualism, and is not related to any cultural symbols or instruments’ decorations. The Rotenese find the significance of their instruments not on any cultural symbols being attached to the instruments, but more on how the instruments nurture the spirit of collectivism and not individualism. In this context, the *meko* fits the idea of becoming a means for facilitating and nurturing the collectivist spirit.

Along with the significance of the *meko* in association with the spirit of collectivism, the *meko* has been associated also with Rotenese identity. Nehemia Faah (2015), for instance, claims that the character of the Rotenese people are represented through *meko* playing. The gentleness of the people of the eastern parts of Rotenese reflects in their *meko* playing characterized by the moderately slow tempo and soft dynamics; whereas the imperviousness of the people of the western parts of Rote is represented through fast and harsh music. *Meko* playing becomes the pathway to learning about the Rotenese people.

In contrast, Basile (1996, 5) argues that the significance of the *sasandu* lies through poetic images and mythological tales rather through displays or actions. Basile finds that for the Rotenese a musical instrument associated with identity has nothing to do with gentle and careful treatment. Instead, for Rotenese the significance of an instrument lies in its function. This is also true in *meko* playing, no Rotenese *meko* performer will be bothered if playing an out-of-tune or even cracked *gong* for the significance of the instrument does not lie in the instrument itself, but in music-making. Poetic images and mythological tales are found in the *sasandu*-accompanied songs. Basile explains further by saying that Rotenese fondness for oration and language takes

place in the *sasandu*-accompanied songs. In sum, the significance of the *sasandu* lies in its function as a vehicle for Rotenese penchant for oration.

According to the context of Basile's research (1992, 1993, 1995 and 1997), his argument might be correct for at least two reasons: 1) the greatest Rotenese *manahelo* such as Yusuf Nggebu of *nusak* Thie, Paulus Bulu of *nusak* Dengka, and Johanes Mesah of *nusak* Thie were still alive; 2) the chant contest displaying two or more *manahelo* was still in practice. On the contrary, during my field research on Rote in 2015, the situation changed at least for three reasons: 1) Yusuf Nggebu, Paulus Bulu and Johanes Mesah died. Alexander Abednegu Malelak, another important Rotenese musician figure who is a close friend of Yusuf Nggebu, is currently sick due to a stroke; 2) the *sasandu gong*'s performers have been declining significantly in number, whereas the number of *meko* ensembles across Rote is relatively more "stable." The holding of annual Rote-Ndao Arts Festival initiated by the government of Rote Ndao Regency has given an impetus to the dynamics of *meko* music across Rote. According to the information given by Mery Bako (2015a), from the office of Culture and Tourism of Rote-Ndao Regency, as of 2015 the number of Rotenese music and dance studios throughout Rote is around 72. The growing number of these studios relates to the procurement program run by the office of Culture and Tourism of Rote-Ndao Regency; 3) the chant contest displaying two or more *manahelo* in Rotenese formal occasions/ceremonies was rarely found.

Based on the Rotenese understanding of the function and significance of the *sasandu* and the *meko*, I attempt to construct a Rotenese classification system of musical instruments.

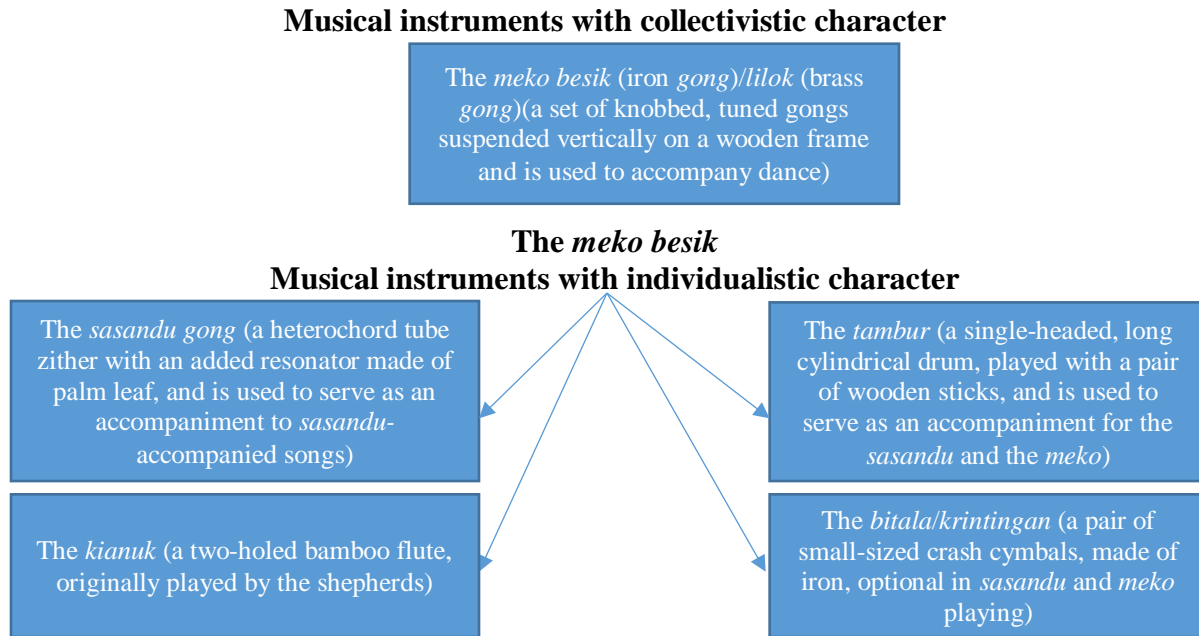


Figure 5.8. A proposed Rotenese “classification” of musical instruments

This is a downward classification system. On the top of this classification sits the first category referring to any musical instruments related to collectivist nature (i.e., the *meko*); followed by the second category referring to any musical instruments with individualistic character (i.e., the *sasandu*, the *tambur*, the *kianuk* and the *bitala*. The *kianuk* and the *bitala* sit at the bottom of this classification system because: 1) the *kianuk* has become extinct; and 2) the *bitala* is an optional musical instrument in both *sasandu* and *meko* music.

5.5. Summary

In the physical absence of the Rotenese classification system of musical instruments, I attempt to construct a local classification system informed by my insider views drawn from the interviews, personal communications and my ethnographic observation. Two important factors that are taken into consideration: 1) the dyadic and triadic concepts that underlie the Rotenese social organization; and 2) the function and significance of the *sasandu* and the *meko*.

The understanding of Rotenese concepts of dyad and triad has been identified as the basis for studying the socio-cultural details of Rotenese musical instruments, namely, the *sasandu* and the *meko*. Through this system, in particular the idea of complementarity and superiority, the structure and order of playing of these two Rotenese instruments are compared. In contrast to the *sasandu* which is fully embedded with the Rotenese cultural symbols (e.g., the use of *haik* and the anthropomorphology of the *sasandu*), in the modest *meko* we find the full application of the Rotenese concepts of dyad and triad through the arrangement of gong bars and *meko* playing.

The name of the *meko*, meaning calling people to gather, emphasizes its primacy over the *sasandu* (literally meaning “to vibrate the strings”). Long before modern communication technology was used in the island of Rote, Rotenese people communicated with each other using their musical instruments, the *meko*. The *meko* previously functioned to signal messages (deaths, funerals, weddings, village meetings) to the community; a function which is irreplaceable by the *sasandu*.

In the cultural context of Rote which is agricultural, collectivism dominates individualism. The *meko* is considered more important than the *sasandu* because it nurtures the spirit of collectivism which is obvious through music playing; or according to Therik (2015), through *meko* playing, social and spiritual functions are fulfilled. The social function of *meko* playing lies in the *esprit de corps* evoked by the residents especially in completing a big job. Striking the gong, then, is an important driving force for remembering the togetherness they experienced in completing that job. Meanwhile, the tradition of striking the gong after harvest has a spiritual function, as a means of thanksgiving for the blessings which have been given by *Lamatuak* (the Almighty God) and a call for the residents to show kindness to those economically less fortunate through charity.

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Chapter 6 THE ORAL HISTORY OF THE SASANDU, THE MEKO AND THE TAMBUR

6.1. Introduction

This chapter is divided into eight sections as follows: 1) Introduction; 2) Aims and Limitations; 3) Theoretical Background on Narrative; 4) The Etymology of the *Sasandu*, *Meko* and *Tambur* is divided into three subsections: a) The Etymology of the *Sasandu*; b) The Etymology of the *Meko*; and c) The Etymology of the *Tambur/Labu Soe*; 5) The Oral History of the *Sasandu* is divided into two subsections: a) The Origins of the *Sasandu*; and b) Discussion on the Oral History of the *Sasandu*; 6) The Oral History of the *Meko Ai/O* and the *Tambur* is split into two subsections: a) The Origins of the *Meko Ai/O* and the *Tambur*; and b) Discussion on the Oral History of the *Meko Ai/O* and the *Tambur*; 7) The Oral History of the Bronze, the Brass and the Iron Gongs is comprised of: a) The Origins of the Bronze, the Brass and the Iron Gongs; and b) Discussion on the Origins of the Bronze, the Brass and the Iron Gongs; and 8) Summary. The subsections on The Origins of the *Sasandu* and The Origins of the *Meko* and the *Tambur* will each present the research participants' narratives.

A written historical documentation of Rotenese musical instruments, in particular the *sasandu*, the *meko* and the *tambur*, is unavailable. The Rotenese have preserved stories about the origins of the *sasandu*, the *meko* and the *tambur* through oral tradition, in particular through narratives and *bini/fini*. Rotenese do not use *bini* or *fini* to communicate with their ancestors' spirits. This language does not have any affiliation with religious or spiritual matters, but is used during formal interactions or ceremonies. It is distinct from everyday language (Fox 1971, 221). This ritual language is constituted by semantic elements, which are dyadic in nature. A short *bini* usually comprises seven sets of pairings, for example: the *bii* – the *manu* “the goat” – “the cock”

and the *koa* – the *pau* “the tail feathers” – “the beard” (Fox 1974, 73-74). The absence of a written historical documentation has inspired me to reconstruct the history of the *sasandu*, the *meko* and the *tambur* sourced from the stories narrated by my research participants through interviews.

The “oral historicity” of this chapter lies in its use of “oral history” as a method of collecting data (Leavy 2011, 4) and in the writing up of the research findings (Abrams 2010, 2). In addition to the data collection and writing up the research findings, this chapter also shows a similarity to oral history, especially because the stories are spoken words and they are kept in human memories, which have limitations. In contrast to the oral history methods, my research participants did not witness or participate in the events of the stories they narrated. These stories were possibly obtained from their grandfathers, fathers or other people.⁴⁷ More discussion on this is found in section 6.3 *Theoretical Background on Narratives*.

6.2. Aims and Limitations

Through the reconstruction (cf. Allen 1984) of the history of the *sasandu* and the *meko*, I will show that differences and similarities presented in the historical narratives of my research participants have yielded a “new” history of the *sasandu*, the *meko* and the *tambur*. The term “new” here should be understood as a dialogical construct that results from comparing, contrasting, and cross-checking of data gathered during field research. The reconstructed history of the *sasandu*, the *meko* and the *sasandu* results from ethnographic interviews that have been

⁴⁷ Although there are some Rotenese female musicians such as Susana Lusi-Nggebu from Batutua Village in the Subdistrict of Southwest Rote and Fransina Pah from Letelangga Urban-Village in the Subdistrict of Lobalain, Rotenese traditional music is dominated by men. Principally, women are allowed to get involved in *meko* playing, but in reality there is resistance from women to join the playing. One primary reason for that is that they want to attribute *meko* playing to men. The stories about Rotenese traditional musical instruments and music legends are passed down from one generation to the next through male ancestors. In the male lineal descendants tradition, only males receive an inheritance, whereas the females will only receive furniture and jewelry (Soh 2008b, 28).

accessed for their internal consistency; cross-checked with other sources (including the other interviews); and placed in a wider context (Thompson 2000, 209-210). The variety in the understanding of historical backgrounds of the *sasandu* and the *meko* indicates clearly the participants' degrees of understanding and points of view.

The variety of narratives presented in this chapter is inevitably large, as accounts regarding the history of the *sasandu* and the *meko* have been transmitted orally through generations. Each participant's narrative might be presented slightly, or even totally, differently from the stories of others, for example, in regard to names of people and places, and the nature and sequence of events. In such situations, it is almost impossible to find any narratives that are told in exactly the same way. As a researcher, I faced a large task in selecting and deciding which stories were interrelated and which were not; why some stories were interconnected whereas the rest were not; and what the participants were trying to tell us through these different versions.

Finding the better way to present a reconstructed history of the *sasandu*, the *meko* and the *tambur* in the lack of a documented history was a significant challenge during the research process for this dissertation. Although all narratives provided by the research participants were authoritative, deciding how to use this information remained problematic, particularly in the lack of secondary sources as a way of comparing my own data collected in the field.

6.3. Theoretical Background on Narrative

As I will employ the word narrative throughout this chapter, it is necessary to explain this term in detail. The word "narrative" in this chapter refers to the term "myth" as defined by Peter Heehs (1994, 2), that is, "sacred narratives of traditional societies generally involving superhuman beings." Narrative, from the Latin word *gnarus* meaning "knowing," is a means to comprehend the existence of human beings (Van der Laan 2016, 28). Through narratives each of

us identify as uniquely different identities from others. Human beings have narratives in their lives because narratives carry moral purpose (i.e., how we behave and why we have to behave as such) (Postman in Van der Laan 2016, 29). Narratives can be fictional or non-fictional (Van der Laan 2016, 29).

A cognitive function of narratives is to create coherence from disconnected events, data, information, and perceptions (Van der Laan 2016, 32). While the rhetorical functions of narratives are remembering, reminding and explaining (Basso 1989, 21). Through narratives we recall things or events that happened in the past; narratives remind us who lived in different time periods to learn from things or events that happened previously; and narratives explain to us why these things or events happened. As I use the word “narrative” to mean “myth,” I will discuss how it differs from the term “history.”

In general, people distinguish between history and myth. History is associated with the work of truth (*logos*), whereas myth refers to the word *mythos* (meaning “word as authoritative pronouncement”) (Heehs 1994, 1). It became the trend in the post-enlightenment historiography to regard the history as “true,” and myth as “false.” In analyzing the narratives I use throughout this chapter, I am not looking for demonstrated truth. On the contrary, I am looking at how these fragmented stories create a web of meaning and coherent information about three Rotenese musical instruments (i.e., the *sasandu*, the *meko* and the *tambur*).

6.4. The Etymology of the *Sasandu*, the *Meko* and the *Tambur*

This section lays a basic foundation for the understanding of the words “*sasandu*,” the “*meko*” and the “*tambur*” according to the Rotenese. Unlike the names of many Indonesian traditional musical instruments which are onomatopoeic (e.g., *kendhang* [a long, double-headed cylindrical drum]; *angklung* [a set of shaken bamboo idiophones of North Sulawesi, West Java

and some other parts of Indonesia]; and *gong*) (Spiller 2004, 9), the names of these three Rotenese musical instruments do not have any correlation to the sound they produce. Rather, they refer to the playing technique (e.g., the *sasandu*), or the primary function of the instrument (e.g., the *meko*).

6.4.1. The Etymology of the *Sasandu*

There are several terms used by scholars for the Rotenese heterochord bamboo tube zither. For instance, Jaap Kunst (1994, 189) uses the word “*sesando*” (səsandəv), whereas Margaret Kartomi (1985, 54) and Douglas Myers (1993, 219) call the instrument the “*sasando*” (sasandəv) (concerning this spelling, it has been discussed in detail in subsection 5.3.3.1 *Terminology and Morphology of the Sasandu*). The words “*sesando*” and “*sasando*” do not belong to the Rotenese. The correct word for the Rotenese heterochord bamboo tube zither is “*sasandu*” (sasandv) or “*sasanu*” (sasanv).

The word “*sandu*” or “*sanu*” means “to vibrate” (“an act of plucking the strings”). *Sasandu* or *sasanu* is a short version of *sandu-sandu* or *sanu-sanu*, meaning “to vibrate repeatedly.” The *sasandu* used to be called “*depo hitu*” (“seven strings”). This name appears in a *bini* saying: “*Sari Sandu la dei depo hitu la dei*” (“To vibrate the instrument’s strings by scrubbing the fingers, and to pick simultaneously by pressing the fingers on the strings”) (Haning 2009e, 14). The words “*depo hitu*” or “*depa hitu*” also appear in Ledoh’s (Ledoh 2015b) story about Sangguana Toulou and Manukoa Ndorosai, two fishermen from the island of Rote who were stranded in Ndana. Basile (2003, 49) suggests the possibility that the earlier *sasandu* was called “*depo hitu*.” Unlike Haning, Ledoh and Basile, Tungga (2015) uses the words “*depo hitu*” to name the earlier *meko ai* (wooden gong). The *meko* used to be called “*depo hitu*” because it consisted of seven pieces of gongs. According to Tungga (2015), the words “*depo hitu*” appear

in this following *bini*: “*Sari sandu la leu, depo hitu la leu, leu la fade sala mana hene hatu, singgo mana kae neu, kae nala umalai do hene nala la’o dale lu lala sasinasu binu lama tutu datenda*” (“The *sasandu* gives announcements, the gong informs the whole families and village members that there has been a death, that tears are being shed and noses running”).

Although there is disagreement among these participants over the usage of the words *depo hitu*, they all agree that the earlier *sasandu* or *meko* consisted of seven strings or pieces of gongs and was called *depo hitu*. I do not know for certain how and when the number of strings on the *sasandu* or gongs on the *meko* were added, but the adding of strings in the *sasandu* explains the relationship between the *sasandu* and the *meko*.

6.4.2. The Etymology of the *Meko*

As already stated, *me’o* (mei’ou) is a common name for the Rotenese gong used by peoples from *nusak* Ringgou, Oepao, Dengka, Lelain, Oenale dan Delha, whereas peoples from other *nusak* (i.e., Landu, Bilba, Diu, Lelenuk, Bokai, Keka, Talae, Termanu, Loleh dan Thie) call it *meko* (mekou). Throughout this dissertation, I use the word “*meko*” instead of “*me’o*” because it is the term used by the majority of people on Rote. The word “*meko*” originally applied to Rotenese wooden and bamboo trough xylophones; later on when gongs were brought into Rote by Javanese traders, the same word has been adapted for the new metal instruments (Basile 2003, 54).

The word “*meko*” consists of two words: “*me*” (meaning “to call”), and “*ko*” (meaning “people”). The word “*meko*” can be interpreted, then, as “a calling for people to gather.” To call all people within a community or village to gather for a certain ceremony or activity was originally the primary function of the *meko*. When the *meko* was played in the past, it signified that an important event was happening. It might be an announcement to the community that one

of the community members had just died, a wedding was taking place, a new house was being built, or some guests were visiting. In relation to the death of a community member, the sound of the gong would indicate who had died. If the largest gong (the *meko ina makamu*) was struck, then it indicated the passing away of an adult, whereas the smallest gong (the *meko ana*) was associated with the death of a child. The function of the *meko* and the *tambur* to communicate sad news is communicated in the following *bini*:

*Hida bei fan na, ma dalu bei don ele,
Lasik ala do lesik ala bengal do ala tuik lae.*

Touk esa nade Pakundii Siok ma labuk,

Ma taek esa nade Sioana Saik ma Mekok.

Pakundii Siok labun nahala na mano sosoak,

Ma Sioana Saik mekon nali na manu ndandak.

Labun nahala na hu sapu nituk fo pola poe malengak,

Ma mekon nili na hu laio ruhak fo hanini matonok

In the past, in the olden days,

The old people told a story, and the elderly ones recounted.

A man named Pakundii Siok owned a *tambur*,

And another man called Sioana Saik had a *meko*.

When Pakundii Siok's *tambur* was played, it bore a meaning,

And when Sioana Saik's *meko* was struck, it brought an understanding.

The sound of *tambur* indicated a death in the community. The body was lying down,

The sound of *meko* pointed out to the loss of a member in the neighborhood. The corpse was reposing (Mboeik 1985, 32-33).

6.4.3. The Etymology of the *Tambur/Labu Soe*

“*Tambur*” is the most common word used among the people of East Nusa Tenggara for the instrument. The Rotenese local terms for the *tambur* are *ina* or *labu*, but these terms are rarely used by Rotenese musicians. In *bini*, the word “*labu*” is used more often than “*tambur*.” For example, “*Pakundii Siok labun nahala na mano sosoak*” (When Pakundii Siok's *tambur* was played, it carried meaning) (Mboeik 1985, 174).

Surprisingly, some of my research participants were not familiar with the term “*ina*” as referring to *tambur*. Anderias Thonak from Ba'adale, the subdistrict of Ba'a, for example, did not know that the word “*ina*,” which is associated with the three lowest gongs within a *meko* set

(i.e., the *meko ina makamu*, the *meko ina taladak* and the *meko ina tataik*), is also used to label the *tambur*. Along with Thonak, there were other research participants (i.e., Reinert Eduart Therik and Lefinus Penu [from East Rote], Yusuf Mesah and Susana Lusi-Nggebu [from Southwest Rote], and Esau Nalle, who was born and grew up in Southwest Rote but later moved to West Rote for work) who did not know that the word *ina* refers to *tambur*.⁴⁸ Unlike the unfamiliar word “*ina*,” the word “*labu*” was more commonly recognized by most of my research participants. According to Nehemia Faah’s (2015) narrative, “*labu*,” the Rotenese stick drum, is named after Rotenese musician Tete Ma Ho Labu.

Rotenese musicians tend to use *labu* or *labu soe* to refer to a small, round shaped stick drum made of coconut shell. This instrument is usually paired with the *sasandu*. *Tambur* is associated with single headed drums played with two sticks. In contrast to *labu soe*, the *tambur* is always paired with gongs.

6.5. The Oral History of the Sasandu

6.5.1. The Origins of the Sasandu

Several individuals have been suggested as the inventors of the *sasandu*: 1) Sangguana Toulou and Manukoa Ndorosai, two extraordinary poets from *nusak* (ex-kingdoms) Thie and Delha; 2) two anonymous shepherds; 3) Lo Malangga and Paledulu; 4) Sangguana Nalle; 5) Sari Sandu;⁴⁹ 6) Nalle Sanggu;⁵⁰ and 7) Muskanan Ma’ and Ma’ Bula. The people suggested as inventors of the *sasandu* appear in the interviews I had with some of my research participants.

⁴⁸ It is unclear why the word “*ina*” is not familiar to Rotenese musicians from the Subdistricts of East, Southwest and West Rote.

⁴⁹ *Sari Sandu* may refer to: 1) the inventor of the *sasandu*; and 2) the name of the instrument itself.

⁵⁰ Numbers such as four, five and six are all from *nusak* Thie.

Narrative 1: The Origin of the *Sasandu* According to Herman Ledoh (2015b) from Busalangga Urban Village, the Subdistrict of Northwest Rote

The Sasandu was invented by Sangguana Toulou and Manukoa Ndorosai. One day the boat these two poets were riding in was washed ashore on Ndana Island,⁵¹ and they were captured by the king of the island. When they were imprisoned, the two chanted a bini while lamenting over their fate. When they sang these lyrics, they moved their hands here and there, striking the doorpost, which produced a beautiful sound. The king's daughter was stunned by the sound and met with the two men accompanied by the palace guard. The two were asked to continue singing the lyrics in the presence of the king. The two prisoners were willing to grant the wish of the princess, but asked to be given three days to prepare a musical instrument. They asked the princess to bring a fishing line and the outer bark/skin of an aromatic tree. Finally, by the third day, they had created a simple sasandu built around the haik. This musical instrument was called "depo hitu" / "depa hitu" (seven strings). The king was impressed by the charm of these two men and released them from the prison.

Sangguana, who fell in love with the princess, went too far in his relationship with her, and she became pregnant. When the king heard this, he became so enraged that he ordered his bodyguard to kill Sangguana.⁵² When Manukoa learned about his friend's fate, he escaped to Rote in the thirteenth century and began producing sasandu.

⁵¹ Ndana is located to the south of Rote, and has an area of 14 km². Currently, Ndana is an uninhabited island. A long time ago Ndana was a state island, which was called *Ndana Kona do Nusa Lai* (the island of Ndana of Nusa Lai) (Haning 2013b, 42).

⁵² The execution of Sangguana was avenged by his only son, Nalle Sanggu by killing all the people of Ndana. With the help and support of the King of *nusak* Thie, the twenty-year-old Nalle Sanggu attacked Ndana in 1680 (Haning 2010b). The mass killing by Nalle Sanggu explains why Ndana, which was previously inhabited until 1680, now has become an unoccupied island. Recently, the central government of Indonesia has set up a military base on the island. Their duty is to protect the areas of Indonesia from outside threats.

Narrative 2 - The Origin of the Sasandu According to Elias Ledoh (2015a) from Busalangga Urban Village, the Subdistrict of Northwest Rote

The sasandu was invented by Sangguana Toulou (Oetifu Village, nusak Thie) and Manukoa Ndorosai (nusak Delha). Sangguana and Manukoa were two extraordinary poets. Once, when they were searching for fish in the waters between Rote and Ndana, the boat they were using was hit by a raging storm. They were cast ashore on the island of Ndana, referred to as a forbidden island. The two of them were captured and imprisoned by the King of Ndana in a cave. Every night the two of them cried and bemoaned their fate while singing bini that stirred the heart. A princess (tuan putri) who was interested in hearing the beauty of their voices asked them to create a new musical instrument and promised that she would marry one of them. Lured by the promise of the princess, in his dream Sangguana saw a foreigner holding an instrument resembling a sasandu made of bamboo and a lontar (Borassus sundaicus) leaf. The foreigner said that this was the musical instrument desired by the princess. This mysterious person even showed Sangguana how to play this musical instrument, and also explained how the instrument should be tuned and named. It is written in a bini as follows: "Sari sandu lah dei ma pote hitu lah dei fo sandu lin neu ndololo, ma pote hitula leu fefeo" ("the beautiful sound produced by the sasandu functions to tie the bonds of brotherhood and unity within a family").

Sangguana awoke from his dream and discovered that the person and the sasandu were just a dream. As he was walking along the edge of the beach at a later time, Sangguana found a stem/trunk of a tree that resembled one of the materials of the sasandu in his dream. He then used the stem to form the instrument that appeared in that dream. The strings were

made from the fiber of a shrub called ditendao.⁵³ Sangguana showed the new instrument that he had created to the princess and played it to accompany beautiful poetry along with Manukoa Ndorosai. The princess then secretly married Sangguana and, not long after that, became pregnant. When the king heard the news, he became enraged and killed Sangguana. Manukoa succeeded in escaping to Delha with the sasandu created by Sangguana. It was Manukoa who then popularized and developed this instrument and even later added two new strings to make a total of nine.

The second version of the invention of the sasandu tells of two herdsmen who were tending their animals. While sleeping, they heard the sound of a spider plucking the strings of its web. This musical experience inspired them to produce an instrument that imitated this spider's pattern of work.

Narrative 3 - The Origin of the Sasandu According to Jonas Mooy (2015) from Oebou Village, the Subdistrict of Southwest Rote

The Sasandu was purportedly invented by Lo Malangga and Paledulu. Lo Malangga, who was sick and not easily cured, decided to look for a place to take shelter (sombar). Finally, he found a lontar tree and decided to rest beneath it. As he was enjoying a rest, he heard a beautiful sound coming from the top of the tree. The sound he heard healed the sickness from which he was suffering. He was curious about the sound he had heard and looked up to see where the sound was coming from. It turned out that what he saw was a spider spinning its web. Inspired by this spider, he cut a leaf and palm frond to form a bucket

⁵³ Since the Indonesian name for this tree is unknown, the botanical term for this tree also remains unknown. Further research on Rotenese botany needs to be conducted.

(haik). The stem fibers were made into strings, and the stalk was used as the instrument's center tube.

Lo Malangga and Paledulu then decided to leave in search of new experiences. Along the way they met up with Pupuk Soroba. The three of them then continued traveling until they reached Talae. There, they met Pao Balo and Bola Lunggi, two men who were patrolling a plantation (mamar). As they were leisurely sitting in a grove of bamboo trees enjoying the gentle breeze, they were startled by a beautiful sound coming from their midst. They discovered a large insect known as bumbu, which was building its web while humming. Pau Balo suggested that Lo Malangga replace the stem of the lontar in the musical instrument he had created with bamboo and the strings with the roots of the banyan tree. These five men then continued on traveling to the West until they arrived in Delha (Andaiko). In Delha, they met up with two goldsmiths from Ndao named Rote Namba and Nggene Soru. These two men replaced the strings with wires of gold so that they produced a beautiful sound. Then, they gave their musical instrument the name of "hitua ma loa lilok, sandu ma kae abas," which means "sasandu with strings of gold threads." The seven men then traveled on to Delha Boa to announce a sasandu festival.

Sanguana Nalle from Thie and Manukoa Ndorosai from Ndana were interested in buying the two kinds of sasandu brought by the seven men: the "sasandu su'i" ("rich sasandu") and the "sasandu fufu diinak" ("sasandu to attract/seduce a girl"). They did not buy the third kind of sasandu called "sasandu loro loloik" or "household sasandu." After buying the aforementioned sasandu su'i, Manukoa Ndorosae became rich.

When the sasandu festival was held, two daughters of King Ndana were present. Watching these two beautiful daughters, Sanguana and his younger brother Toulou fell in

love. But it was not easy to win the hearts of these two girls. Returning home, Sangguana and Toulou tricked both of their wives about their plans to sail to Ndana. Once the time had come, they sailed to Ndana and brought along a sasandu. So that the people of Ndana would not be aware, the two hid themselves in the bathing place of the two princesses, referred to as Oe Ana Feto. When the two princesses were taking their baths, Sangguana and Toulou played their sasandu. Upon hearing the sasandu being played by Sangguana and his younger brother, the two princesses fell in love with them. Worried that the King would find out, they met secretly in the bathing place. At that time there was a regulation that forbade Ndana women from marrying men from outside of Ndana.

Eventually, the King became suspicious about the behavior of his two daughters who always spent a long time in the bathing area. He sent his bodyguard to investigate what was going on. The King then received information about the two foreigners. He caught Sangguana and Toulou, and imprisoned both of them in an underground dungeon before executing them. However, before the execution was carried out, Sangguana was able to hand his sasandu over to Nunu Foe, a man from Ndana who usually brought food and drink to Sangguana and Toulou when the two of them were imprisoned. Nunu Foe then escaped to the territory of king Messakh in Thie. He married a local resident and had a child named Hitu Nunu. Hitu Nunu later had a child named Nunu Hitu (Mbura Lai).⁵⁴

Narrative 4 - The Origin of the Sasandu According to Esau Nalle (2015b) from Oenitas Village, the Subdistrict of West Rote

The sasandu was invented before Sangguana Nalle left for Ndana taking the sasandu with him in the 1690s. This also refutes the idea that Sangguana Nalle created the sasandu

⁵⁴ For further information, see Nunuhitu (1925; 1955).

when he was in Ndana. There were reputedly three kinds of sasandu created: sandu su 'i (sasandu of wealth), sandu masosoak (sasandu of power), and sandu loroko (sasandu of a journey). Sangguana Nalle acquired the sandu masosoak by stealing it from the unknown inventor of the sasandu. In the meantime, another sasandu was owned by a gold craftsman, who fitted out the sasandu initially with strings of gold. The latest sasandu, sandu loroko, disappeared with its inventor.

Narrative 5 - The Origin of the Sasandu According to Yusuf Mesah (2015) from Meoain Village, the Subdistrict of Southwest Rote

The sasandu is the first instrument invented on Rote. One reason we can say this is because stories associated with the sasandu had been circulating before the gong appeared. There are at least two versions of how the sasandu was invented: 1) it was created by Sangguana Nalle, a fisherman from nusak Thie who was reputedly clever at playing this instrument; and 2) it was invented by Sari Sandu. The latter story goes that one day Sari Sandu, who was sitting and relaxing at the edge of a cave, heard a melodious sound coming from a large spider who was strumming the web made from her saliva in the cave. Another time when Sari Sandu was resting under a palm (lontar) tree, he listened to the beautiful sound produced by a dry lontar frond that had almost broken off. Inspired by these two sounds, Sari Sandu searched for a piece of bamboo and carefully gouged out the stalks, leaving the bamboo fibers (fifik) still attached to the stalk. To stretch them tightly, Sari Sandu used a stone to prop up the fibers and used a piece of wood to pull them. He then began to think about what to use for his instrument in exchange for the cave, which functioned as a resonator. Then he remembered the bucket or haik commonly used by the residents of Rote to draw water.

This idea worked out well because the sound produced by the sasandu was reflected more strongly by the surface of the haik. After that, Sari Sandu increased the number of strings to seven.⁵⁵ The sasandu was originally played by knocking on it to produce sound; later on it was plucked.⁵⁶

In the old days, if someone wanted to learn to play the sasandu from a sasandu master, he was usually told to capture a little spider that could run quickly across the surface of the water and take a piece of palm frond that is always quivering whether there is a breeze or not. These two things were then pulverized, using coconut oil, and applied to the person's fingers. The teacher hoped that, by doing that, the student could quickly catch what was being taught by the teacher, the student's fingers could move swiftly like a water spider rushing across the water, and the sasandu could vibrate like the lontar leaf.

Narrative 6 - The Origin of the Sasandu According to Godlief Eliasar Tungga (2015) from Busalangga Urban Village, the Subdistrict of Northwest Rote

Nalle Sanggu was the first person to invent the sasandu. This instrument was invented when the ancestors of the Rotenese lived in caves and hollows in the woods: “Koaneu lain Manadu lain, kio neu poin, poin manasula uak, lai mana deta nalle” (God sent the twelve disciples to give advice to the ancestors of the Rotenese people who were still living in caves in the rock and hollows in the wood). Nalle Sanggu plucked the sasandu to subdue these

⁵⁵ Mesah did not mention the previous number of the *sasandu*'s strings.

⁵⁶ Mesah's assertion is in line with Jaap Kunst (1994, 189), who argues that in ancient times the *sesando* (sic) was an idiochord. Christopher Basile (2003, 128) also discusses the idiochord *sasandu* in his dissertation, but when it was confirmed with his research participants, none of them had heard about the type of this *sasandu*. Although we are uncertain about this, Kunst might be correct if we refer to Kusano Taeko's (1977, 130) argument that heterochords are to have originated as idiochords.

ancestors so that they would leave their hiding places in rock caves and wooden hollows and gather together.

Narrative 7 - The Origin of the Sasandu According to Onasias Sodak (2015) from Onatali Urban Village, the Subdistrict of Central Rote

Lalai Eda is the forerunner of the Rotenese ancestors. He came from Media – Persia, and landed on the island of Seram Do Dai (Seram and Ambon) using a raft in 500 B.C. Lalai Eda's children included Pa'da Lalais, Ndu Lalais, Danga Lalais, Mo'do Lalais, Puu Lalais, Ndeko Lalais, Ndau Lalais, Leli Lalais, Batu Lalais, Poi Lalais, Sani Lalais, and Kai Lalais. Puu Lalais lived in Puu Lain (Maubesi), Ndeko Lalais in Ketu Lain (Huiledo), Ndau Lalais in Ndau Lain, Leli Lalais in Seluo Lain, Sani Lalais between the border of Nggodi Meda and Pantai Baru, Poi Lalais in Suebela, Batu Lalais in Inggufao, and Kai Lalais in Oenesu (West Kupang). Kai Lalais begat Bula Kai and Fala Kai, while Bula Kai begat Ma' Bula (Seram) and Ba'a Bula (Ternate).

The descendants of Fala Kai came in search of their ancestors in Rote in the middle of the Eighteenth Century. Ma' Bula, who begat Muskanan Ma', left Seram in search of his grandparents who were scattered throughout Rote at the beginning of the First Century. The wife of Ma' Bula had died before that in Seram. Ma' Bula landed first in Oepau, East Rote. Because he was unable to find out about his ancestors there, he went on to the island of Sabu (Savu).⁵⁷ On Sabu, King Mata Laihau told him that the ancestors Ma' Bula was searching for were unknown there. Because he stayed quite a long time on Sabu, Ma' Bula married the daughter of the king whose name was Lusi Mata. Ma' Bula and Lusi Mata later left Sabu and landed in Oeseli, Southwest Rote. In Oeseli, Lusi Mata gave birth to a son named Nata Ma'.

⁵⁷ Savu is the spelling used in all English-language publications.

Ma' Bula and Muskanan Ma' left Lusi Mata and Nata Ma' in Oeseli, and then continued their journey on to Tangga Tiga Ratus, Kuli Village, Lole. There they met an elderly giant named Nggeo Nes. Nggeo Nes told them that Pa'da Lalais and his descendents had not yet arrived in the territory of Lole. The boat that had been left there by Ma' Bula in Lole had turned to stone. At night, they saw smoke rising from the north. That is why Ma' Bula and his son traveled to Pa'da. During their quest, they stayed in a cave in the rocks in Batu Leli known as Ma' Batu. From a higher plane they observed rock caves with smoke rising from them. When they spotted several places with smoke, they were certain that their grandparents lived in that territory.

To invite their grandparents and families to come and gather together, Ma' Bula and Muskanan Ma' began to chant using poems that told about their ancestry. However, the descendants of his grandfather did not respond to the chants since those sounds were foreign to them. Ma' Bula and Muskanan Ma' then created a sasandu from tree roots or jungle vines which had been dried. They used that sasandu to accompany the chants.

Narrative 8 - The Origin of the Sasandu According to Yeri Fanggidae (2015a) from Onatali Urban Village, the Subdistrict of Central Rote

The sari sanu or sasanu existed before the gong. The creator of the sari sanu was inspired by the sound of the rustling lontar leaves when the tappers were collecting the sap from the lontar tree. The elders then tried to imitate the sound by making a new instrument from lontar leaves with bamboo stems as handles and strings made from twisted kekak (Ficus benjamina) tree fibers. Later on, the people of Rote developed the sasanu into a gong

instrument made from *nitende* (*Rhizophora sp*⁵⁸) wood. The *Meko ai*'s tone sequence was adjusted to the *sari sanu*. *Meko besik* and *meko mata lilok* came later.

The *sari sanu* was created first when Rote was founded. In the beginning Rote was named *Ngginu'ia Ngganupa*, that is, the island rich with marine produce and natural resources. The first generations came from *Seram* (*Sera do daek*) and spread throughout East *Nusa Tenggara*, *Belu Mau*, *Savu Mau* and *Rote Mau*. These people came in two waves. The first wave landed in the eastern part of Rote. They named the island Rote. The second group landed in the western part. The *sari sanu* instrument was played, accompanied by *bini*, to unite the brothers and sisters who had been separated. The first *sari sanu* was made in the eastern part of Rote. The original name for Rote was *Lote*. A song that is still sung until now and invites those living abroad to return is *Li Ailado*. On the gong, this sound is called *Lelendo biasa* (regular).

6.5.2. Discussion on the Oral History of the *Sasandu*

In general, the supposed inventor(s) of the *sasandu* have been associated with one or more of: 1) a musician from *nusak* Thie who was visiting a small island called *nusak* Ndana; 2) the history of the island; and 3) two herdsmen/palm tappers. Although there are slight differences among my research participants concerning the name of the Thie musician,⁵⁹ to a certain extent they agree that the *sasandu*'s inventor was a musician named *Sanguana/Sanggu*. This assertion has, however, been refuted by Jonas Mooy from Oebou Village in the subdistrict of Southwest Rote, and Esau Nalle from Oenitas Village in the subdistrict of West Rote. Mooy asserts that

⁵⁸ *Sp* stands for species.

⁵⁹ For example, *Sanguana Tulo* (according to Herman Ledoh and Elias Ledoh); *Sanguana Nalle* (according to Yusuf Mesah); and *Nalle Sanggu* (according to Godlief Eliasar Tungga).

Sanguana Nalle bought the *sasandu* in Rote before he left for *nusak* Ndana; whereas Nalle asserts that Sanguana Nalle stole the instrument from its inventor.

According to Mooy (2015), Sanguana Nalle bought the “*sasandu fufu diinak*” (“*sasandu* to attract/seduce a girl”) at *nusak* Delha during a *sasandu* competition. He bought it from a group of men consisting of Lo Malangga, Paledulu and Pupuk Soroba (from *nusak* Thie); Pao Balo and Bola Lunggi (from *nusak* Talae); Rote Namba and Nggene Soru (from Ndao). Sanguana brought along this *sasandu* when he was visiting Ndana to win the heart of Ndana’s princess. According to Nalle (2015b), the *sasandu* had been in existence long before Sanguana Nalle visited *nusak* Ndana in the 1690s. Sanguana was suspected of stealing the “*sandu masosoak*” (“the *sasandu* of power”), from its unknown inventor. Both Mooy and Nalle assert that Sanguana was not the inventor of the *sasandu*. Sanguana obtained the instruments from someone else.

According to Herman Ledoh, Elias Ledoh and Jonas Mooy’s narratives, Sanguana Nalle was executed by the king of Ndana. Sanguana, who fell in love with the Ndana princess, had gone too far in his relationship with her and had caused her to become pregnant. The King of Ndana, who was furious after finding out what had happened to his daughter, commanded his guardians to catch and execute Sanguana.

Those who relate the invention of the *sasandu* to the history of the island include Godlief Eliezer Tunga and Onasias Sodakh. Tunga and Sodakh both emphasize the function of the *sasandu*, that is, to call people to gather together. According to Tunga’s version, Nalle Sanggu was God’s envoy sent to encourage the people living in the places to come out and assemble as a community. Jesus Christ and his twelve disciples have been working among the Rotenese from

the time when the island was first inhabited.⁶⁰ Unlike Tunga, Sodak's narrative has nothing to do with Christianity. The *sasandu* was used by Ma' Bula and Muskanan Ma' to accompany the Rotenese chants they sang while conjuring the spirits of their ancestors.

Elias Ledoh and Djony Theedens are among those who attribute the invention of the *sasandu* to two herdsmen. According to Ledoh's (2015a) version these two herdsmen were unknown; whereas, according to Theedens (1994), these two herdsmen/palm tappers were Lunggi Lain and Balok Ama Sina. These two herdsmen were inspired by the sound of a spider plucking the strings of its web (Ledoh 2015a). Lunggi Lain and Balok Ama Sina received their inspiration while making *haik* (Theedens 1994).

Among the narratives on the origins of the *sasandu* presented above, the narrative of Jonas Mooy is the most distinctive, for it includes the most names associated with the invention of the *sasandu* (e.g., Lo Malangga, Paledulu, Pau Balo, Pupuk Soroba, Bola Lunggi, Sangguana Nalle, and Manukoa Ndorosae). The distinctiveness of Jonas Mooy's version lies in its attempt to mediate the disagreement among some Rotenese musicians about the identity of the inventor of the *sasandu*. Mooy's approach is quite unusual among the Rotenese, who emphasize personal/group uniqueness.

Concerning when the *sasandu* was invented, it is difficult to say for we lack any secondary sources. Although the end of the Seventeenth Century (shortly before the 1690s) has been suggested by Esau Nalle, this date remains questionable. The year Sangguana Nalle paid a visit to Ndana, as suggested by Nalle, does not correspond with the year when Nalle Sanggu inflicted punishment in retribution for his father's death, as suggested by Haning (2010b, 60). Nalle

⁶⁰ As observed by Fox (1983, 15), Rotenese claim themselves to be the oldest and most prominent Christians in Timor area. They have professed Christianity long before the coming of Dutch missionaries in the beginning of the Eighteenth Century.

suggests that Sangguana visited Ndana in the 1690s, but Haning suggests 1680 as the year when Nalle Sanggu avenged his father's death.

One thing that we know for sure is that the *sasandu* is not unique to the Rotenese (Vetter 2015). Idiochord and heterochord tube zithers are commonly found throughout Indonesia.⁶¹ In Sabu, an island about one hundred and fifty kilometers away from Rote, there is a tube zither with a resonator made of *lontar*-leaf known as *ketadu haba*. Physically, the *ketadu haba* is similar to the *sasandu*, but the only difference is the *ketadu haba* comes with eight metal strings, while the *sasandu* is a heterochord tube zither with ten to eleven metal strings. Both Savunese and Rotenese claim that the instrument is originally from their islands (Basile 1998c, 802-803).

In the absence of historical evidence from the East Nusa Tenggara regions, in particular, Rote, it is plausible to suggest that the idiochord and the heterochord instruments were introduced to Rote by Javanese, Makassarese, or Arab traders in exchange for local commodities (e.g., sandalwood, turtle shells, honey and horses) between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Trade is the most logical way to explain how this aspect of material culture has been distributed from one place to another.

6.6. The Oral History of the *Meko Ai/O* and the *Tambur*

6.6.1. The Origins of the *Meko Ai/O* and the *Tambur*

Like the narratives on the invention of the *sasandu*, the narratives on the invention of the *meko* and *tambur* are also myths. They are considered symbolic and sacred narratives, and

⁶¹ For example, the *keteng-keteng* (a two-stringed bamboo idiochord tube zither of Karo, North Sumatera) (Kartomi 1985, 44); the *guntang* (a Balinese one-stringed bamboo zither comprises of large size [*kempur*] and small size [*kempli*]) (Kartomi 1985, 39); the *baba / go wěto / tinding* (a Florinese one-stringed bamboo idiochord tube zither) (Kunst 1942, 128); the *kediding/adiding* (a six-stringed bamboo idiochord tube zither from Alor) (IACI 2011); and the *mendut* (a one-stringed bamboo idiochord and heterochord tube zither from Manggarai, Flores) (Theedens 1994, 18).

usually their origins are unknown. Uniquely, some narratives are date-specific and set from the beginning of Rote to the fifteenth century.

Some individuals that have been attributed with the invention of the *meko ai* and the *meko o* are: 1) Liti Leang; 2) Posi Mumu Meko and Tadu Mari Meko; and 3) an anonymous tribal leader (*manela'i*). On the other hand, individuals that have been associated with the invention of *tambur* are: 1) Bau / Batu Leang; and 2) Tete Ma Ho Labu.

Narrative 1 - The Origin of the *Meko Ai/O* and the *Tambur* According to Chornelis Tuy (2015) from Daleholu Village, the Subdistrict of South Rote

The gong and drum were invented around the middle of the twelfth century by two brothers named Liti Leang and Bau Leang. They were the eighth generation from the first people of Seram who lived in Rote or Roti (bread) as it is referred to by Americans. Liti Leang and Bau Leang lived in East Rote.

Narrative 2 - The Origin of the *Meko Ai/O* and the *Tambur* According to Yosias Dethan (2015) from Tebole Village, the Subdistrict of South Rote

The gong and the drum were created by two brothers of the kingdom of Bilba named Liti Leang and Batu Leang. The two of them made these instruments in the Fifteenth Century. Liti Leang and Batu Leang were sons of Leang Gaba. The gong, the first of which was wooden, was made out of red and purple memeak meko aik wood. These two brothers were farmers who protected their fields from monkeys. The meko ai was designed with the main purpose of chasing away the monkeys so they would not damage their fields. The drum was initially made from coconut shell with a drumhead of buffalo skin. These two people are said to have created four sounds (li): Kakamusu, Foti, Lolongek Ina, and Te'o Renda. The meko ai, which they had created at the very beginning, already had nine notes.

Narrative 3 - The Origin of the *Meko Ai/O* and the *Tambur* According to Nehemia Faah (2015) from Olafulihaa Urban Village, the Subdistrict of Pantai Baru

In the beginning, Rote was a secluded and tranquil island because there were only a few residents. Those few residents moved from place to place and usually lived in caves. They were therefore nicknamed Bei babi luak, ma leo luak (people who live in caves in the rock and hollows in trees). They depended upon forest products, such as tubers, fruits and vegetables.

Two gods in power at that time were Mane Koa Do Sain and Bebengu Do Liun. These two gods ruled the entire universe of Rote, including all of the people who inhabited this island. In those days, there were Rotenese people who loved beauty and were talented in the arts: Daka Lena Saek, Mana Oro Liuk, Posi Mumu Meko, Tadu Mari Meko, and Tete Ma Ho Labu (men); and Koi Dula and Lema Le'u (women). These seven artists paid close attention to the sounds of animals and insects around them, such as frogs, birds and crickets.

One time, in the dead of night, the seven artists heard a melodious sound that captivated them. They had never heard a sound like this before. This sound occurred repeatedly every night when everything was still. They tried comparing this sound with the animal sounds they heard every day, yet the beauty of this sound was unmatched. Driven by their great curiosity, they decided to search and find out what was making the sound. After receiving Mane Koa Do Sain and Bebengu Do Liun's permission and blessings, the seven artists began their quest to find the source of the sound. Of the seven, only five succeeded in finding it: Posi Mumu Meko, Tadu Mari Meko, Tete Maho Labu, Koi Dula and Lema Le'u. The beautiful sound they found came from some pieces of wood (kayu Bina) being struck by Biti Lasi and Kale Nanaruk. The rim of the drum (tambur) was made from coconut shell and the head/membrane from bat skin. The number of wooden bars being played by Biti Lasi and Kale Nanaruk was

nine and each slab had different pitch. These nine wooden bars were placed side by side on a trough made from soja wood. The edge of the trough had been covered with white bark to reduce the vibration when struck.

Posi Mumu Meko, Tadu Mari Meko and Tete Maho Labu watched carefully and tried to imitate how Rote Biti Lasi and Kale Nanaruk sounded the gong and drum (tambur). After observing the playing of Rote Biti Lasi and Kale Nanaruk for a short while, finally Posi Mumu Meko and Tadu Mari Meko were successful in sounding the nine gongs, and Tete Maho Labu played the drum (the tambur). Meanwhile, Koi Dula and Lema Le'u created a dance based on the sounds they heard.

Not long afterwards, Daka Lena Saek and Mana Oro Liuk who had gone off to a different place, met up with the other five. The seven of them then agreed to purchase a set of meko ai and tambur from Rote Biti Lasi and Kale Nanaruk. After acquiring the musical instruments they had wanted, they brought back the meko ai and tambur. This wooden gong was named meko after Posi Mumu Meko and Tadu Mari Meko, who were the very first people to play this instrument. In turn, the drum (tambur) was named labu because it was played for the very first time by Tete Maho Labu. That is why until today the residents of Rote all refer to these instruments as meko and labu. Only, there is a small difference in the way the term “meko” is pronounced - as “meko” in the kingdoms of Landu, Bilba, Diu, Lelenuk, Bokai, Ba'a, Keka, Talae, Termanu and Lole; and “me'o” in the kingdoms of Ringgou, Oepau, Lelain, Dengka, Thie, Delha, and Oenale.⁶²

⁶² Faah's statement is possibly incorrect regarding the pronunciation of “gong.” According to people from nusak Thie, the correct pronunciation is “meko” instead of “me'o.”

Narrative 4 - The Origin of the *Meko Ai/O* and the *Tambur* According to Jonas Mooy (2015) from Oebou Village, the Subdistrict of Southwest Rote

The earliest traditional instrument in Rote was the wooden gong. The wooden gong preceded the invention of the sasandu and iron gong. One day, villagers chose one among them to become king (manela'i). The person chosen as manela'i had to present his vision and mission in leading that village. Manukoa Lasi, who was chosen to be the manela'i spoke about his name which meant "rooster." Like a rooster, Manukoa hoped to be able to nurture and protect the citizens under his power and authority. Queen Sang Ina Lia, whose name was Manupui Dulu, meaning "a bird who is sensitive toward circumstances," asked her husband to think of something that could console the people when they were sad or in mourning. For inspiration, the King was advised to go to the seashore. On the seashore he heard a gong being played by two traders from abroad. Upon his return to the kingdom, Manukoa chose the two strongest people (perani) to seize the gong from the hands of the two traders. When the two men who were sent by Manukoa arrived at the seashore, they fell asleep listening to the gong being played by those two traders. The traders woke the two villagers up and threatened them by saying: "Rani sio rai madak, na sio rai saimboe" ("if you have nine heroes, then we also have nine heroes"). The two mighty men were then asked to return to the king and come back with a machete and an axe to make a gong. The king did not believe the traders, so then he sent three more strong men to snatch the gong from the hands of the two traders. But, just as before, when they arrived at the seashore, the five men fell into a deep sleep.

The two traders then woke them up and threatened them with the same words as before. This time they asked the five strong men to go to the forest to look for a wild tree with three branches. This wood would later be used to fashion a set of nine gongs placed one after the other on a wooden box called lalanggak meko or degu-degu. The wooden gongs they

produced were called “meko riti fani oe” (“brass gong” which sounds like a bee). Upon their return journey to the palace, the five men were asked to walk down the beach and, if they found a hendak (Pandanus tectorius) tree, they were asked to shoot the animals/wildlife that had settled on top of it (i.e., the bats). They were then asked to take the skin from the bats. During the next trip they were asked to take the shell sain boak nonon (friend of the fruit that comes from the sea). What was meant by “fruit from the sea” was the palmyra palm (lontar), whereas the friend of the fruit was the coconut. The bat’s skin was then stretched to cover the opening of the coconut shell, referred to as bamba bau ro, which developed to become bamba bau bibiro when the membrane was replaced by goat skin.⁶³

Narrative 5 - The Origin of the *Meko Ai/O* and the *Tambur* According to Anderias Ruy (2016) from Oebou Village, the Subdistrict of Southwest Rote

In the beginning humans’ faces looked like monkeys’ faces, and their feet looked like those of pigs. Human beings did not have a leader to protect them. Later, they agreed to choose a leader among themselves. The searching began with elephants and ended up with pigs, but then it was decided that pigs were not good enough to become their leader. They started searching again and finally found a rooster was their best choice. The rooster and his wife, a wild forest bird, shared the leadership.

Realizing that they did not have any entertainment in their household, the wife suggested her husband fill this gap. The Rooster King then delegated his four soldiers to wander around to the three cardinal directions (i.e., north, south and west) to solve this problem. Then they continued going to the East until they reached the borderline between sand and water. Soon

⁶³ Based on the history of the invention of this wooden gong, Jonas Mooy is convinced that the wooden gong was invented before the sasandu.

they watched the Sun rise from the water. The sunrise was followed by a beautiful sound coming from a cave.

As they were curious, they went into the cave to find the sound they had heard. In the cave, they met with two snakes; one was Meomalo. Meomalo produced a sound close to the sound of a nine-gong set by shaking its scales. The other snake, Dutakule, used its throat to produce a sound similar to the sound of the tambur.

In order to snatch the instruments, the king added three more soldiers to kill these snakes. Unfortunately, they failed and came back empty-handed. One night, when the king and his wife were sleeping, Dutakule came to their dreams and commanded them to do several things:

- 1. They had to wake up immediately and to meet some people on the beach;*
- 2. They had to cut a hendak tree and use it to make a trough;*
- 3. They had to find a coconut fruit on the beach, and to take its shell for making a tambur;*
- 4. They had to find a red-headed cat hiding on the peak of a hendak tree, kill it, and use its head skin for the drumhead;*
- 5. They had to entrust seven soldiers to cut the branches of the Bina (Mallotus repandus) wood into two pieces, and to use these to make the nine wooden bars;*
- 6. They had to arrange and to suspend these nine wooden bars horizontally on a trough.*

These nine bars were named as follows: meko ina talada, meko ina su konak, meko ina su kik, meko nggasa lai, meko nggasa dae, leko lai, leko dae, titok lai, titok dae.

The king and his wife followed Meamalo and Dutakule's commands. Meamalo then took some of its scales and attached them to the trough, while Dutakule took its throat and attached it to the tambur.

6.6.2. Discussion on the Oral History of the *Meko Ai/O* and the *Tambur*

The five narratives outlined in section 6.6.1. can be split into two groups. The first group (represented by Tuy and Dethan) points directly to the inventors of the *meko ai* and the *tambur*. The second group (represented by Mooy, Ruy and Faah) relates the invention of the *meko ai* and the *tambur* to the search for: 1) a beautiful sound played by unknown musicians (Faah); or 2) new musical instruments functioning as entertainment (Mooy and Ruy).

Tuy and Dethan attribute the invention of the *meko* and the *tambur* to Liti Leang and Bau Leang from East Rote. Both narrators agree that Liti Leang and Bau Leang were from East Rote. Although Ruy does not mention Liti Leang and Bau Leang in his narrative, he associates the East as the place where the *meko* and the *tambur* originated. East Rote as the place of origin of the *meko* and the *tambur* is supported by my other two research participants (i.e., Lens Haning and Pieter Sjoen). They both believe that *meko* music from East Rote is more authentic than that of the West. Haning (2012) exemplifies the *foti* dance of East and West Rote. In East Rote, the dancers will not lift their feet higher than their shins, whereas in West Rote, the dancers will lift their feet above their knee. The West Rote has even developed into what is known as *Seni Kreasi Baru* (Sjoen 2015). Based on these presumptions, it becomes plausible to suggest that the *meko* and the *tambur* are from East Rote.

Concerning the time period, Tuy disagrees with Dethan. According to Tuy, Liti Leang and Bau Leang found the instruments in the middle of the twelfth century. In contrast, Dethan refers to the fifteenth century. Unlike Mooy, Dethan's narrative is more detailed when it comes to discussing the function of the instrument and the material employed for *meko* making.

Faah's narrative offers an etymological explanation of the words "*meko*" and "*tambur*." Due to the artistic sensitivity and curiosity of the seven artists (i.e., Daka Lena Saek, Mana Oro

Liuk, Posi Mumu Meko, Tadu Mari Meko, Tete Ma Ho Labu, Koi Dula and Lema Le'u), they were motivated to find the “unmatched” sound they heard. Their laborious work and effort eventually paid off.

Mooy's and Ruy's narratives share much in common. First, both began with a desire of a local ruler to look for a musical instrument to entertain his household (Anderias Ruy) or his community (Jonas Mooy). Secondly, they both note that, to some extent, the local rulers were associated with a “rooster” and a “bird.” According to Ruy, the rulers were a real rooster and a real bird, whereas in Mooy's version, the king and his wife were human beings with their names referring to “rooster” (Manukua Lasi) and “bird” (Manupui Dulu). Thirdly, the rulers gave a command to their brave men (*pelani*, *perani*) to find the wanted musical instrument. Fourthly, these *pelani* heard beautiful music played by a couple of musicians from afar, and they attempted to snatch the musical instruments from the hands of these musicians, but failed. Finally, these musicians taught (Jonas Mooy) or inspired (Anderias Ruy) these *pelani* to create their own *meko* and *tambur*.

Four research participants (i.e., Dethan, Faah, Mooy and Ruy) agree that nine is the number of gongs or bars in a *meko lalanggak esa*. Nine pieces of gongs or bars in a *meko* set correspond with the number of gongs or bars in a standard *meko*. Based on these narratives, I conclude that the number of gongs or bars of a *meko* set is nine. This number also explains that the term *depa hitu* given to the early *meko ai* or *o* is incorrect since it implies that a *meko* set consists of seven gongs or bars.

Like the *sasandu*, the *meko ai/o* and the *tambur* is not a unique instrument to the Rotenese. Wooden and bamboo xylophones are found in many places in Indonesia, for example, the *kalondang* (a tuned, seven-keyed wooden xylophone of the Pakpak Dairi, Sumatera) (Kartomi

1985, 41), the *gambang* (a Javanese wooden trough xylophone consisting of sixteen tuned wooden keys) (Kartomi 1985, 29), the *rindik* (a Balinese bamboo xylophone tuned in *slendro* or occasionally in *pélog*) (Harnish 1998, 754), the *cungklik* (a trough xylophone of Bali) (2007, 357), and the *letor/geko* (a simple xylophone of Flores) (Basile 1998a, 793). It is plausible to suggest that wooden or bamboo xylophones were introduced to Rote either by Florinese or Javanese traders long before the heterophone tube zither existed in Rote. One primary reason for suggesting this is that the name *sasandu gong* implies that the *sasandu* follows the tuning of the already extant *meko* (the Rotenese wooden and bamboo xylophones) as well as their music.

The *meko ai/o* has become a distinctive musical instrument to the Rotenese, not because of its materials, scales or the varieties of music it plays, but primarily because of the arrangement of the wooden bars. In contrast to the common wooden/bamboo slab arrangement in other xylophones, the wooden/bamboo bars in a set of *meko* are arranged from right to left (from the lowest to the highest notes). This idiosyncratic arrangement of this instrument has been discussed in detail in Chapter 5 *An Insider understanding of Rotenese Musical Instruments*.

6.7. The Oral History of the Bronze, the Brass and the Iron Gongs

6.7.1. The Origins of the Bronze, the Brass and the Iron Gongs

While there is some disagreement among the Rotenese about the inventors of the *sasandu* and the *meko ai*, most Rotenese people agree that bronze gong and brass gong (*meko lilok*) were not originally from Rote. A group of people, particularly kings or influential individuals, and foreign traders are suggested as the carriers. The first group includes the black Chinese (*sinanggeok*)⁶⁴ (Ledoh 2015b; Fanggidae 2015a); by Liti Leang from Dengka (Therik 2015); by

⁶⁴ Since the term “Black Chinese” (“*sinanggeok*”) does not appear in any literature on Timor, it is very plausible that this term might refer to the ethnically mixed Portuguese group that dominated the politics of Timor in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Or according to Boxer (Parimatha 2008, 73), they were called the Black Portuguese/Topas, resulting from the mixed marriages between Portuguese men and Timorese women.

the Indians (Tungga 2015); by Foe Mbura, a King of *nusak* Thie (Ndolu 2015; Malelak 2015a); Ndi'i Hua, a King of *nusak* Lole (Ndolu 2015; Malelak 2015a); Tou Dengga Lilo, a King of *nusak* Ba'a (Ndolu 2015); Tou Dengga Lilo, a King of *nusak* Dengka (Sjioen 2015); Ndara Naong, a King of *nusak* Termanu (Ndolu 2015); and Ledoh from *nusak* Dengka (Malelak 2015a), who had returned from pursuing knowledge in Matabi (currently Jakarta).

The second group includes traders from Java (Lusi-Nggebu 2015; Haning 2015d; Tuy 2015; Selly 2015), Makassar (South Sulawesi) (Haning 2015d; Tuy 2015; Selly 2015), Sumbawa (West Nusa Tenggara) (Haning 2015d) and Arabia (Mesah 2015; Haning 2015d; Mooy 2015; Ledoh 2015a; Tuy 2015) in exchange for horses,⁶⁵ sugar water (*air tuak*), tortoise shells, and honey.

In contrast to bronze gongs and *meko lilok*, which have been imported from outside Rote, the iron gong (the *meko besik*) is manufactured in Rote. Some pioneers of the *meko besik* manufacture in Rote were Bakarama Rao (Faah 2015), Yeremias Ledoh from *nusak* Dengka (Ledoh 2015a; Selly 2015), and Folamanu from Ndao (Nalle 2015b).

In the beginning, the number of gongs in a brass gong ensemble (the *meko lilok*) was different from what we have today.⁶⁶ Rotenese musicians bought the gongs from the Arab traders. They only bought the gongs they liked until a set of gongs was formed (*meko langgak*

⁶⁵ The Arab traders were very specific about the horses they wanted. They were looking for horses that had three creases on their foreheads and two large veins along their backs, as expressed in the following *bini*: “*mata arak ena tehu ela uak arak dei*.” Even if that horse is beautiful but lacks two prominent veins on its back with that Arab feature, it will be rejected. A horse that has those two markers is reportedly known to be a strong horse that does not get tired easily. When this kind of horse was found, sometimes Arab traders would not hesitate to trade a big box of gold for it. This explains why in the past there were many people in Rote who owned gold.

⁶⁶ There has been no exact information concerning the number of previous metal gongs, but Elias Ledoh (2015a) mentions that the Arab traders brought a set of gongs consisting of forty pieces.

esa). After that, the people of Rote tried to imitate the manufacture of the *meko lilok* by using steel plates from used drums or bridge frameworks.

There is no accurate information about when iron gong making first began on Rote. Two possible explanations have been offered. One notion is that it has been there for hundreds of years, primarily since the rulership of Kings Foe Mbura (1728 – 1747) from *nusak* Thie, Ndi'i Hua from Lole, Ndara Naong from Ba'a, and Toudenga Lilo from Lelain.⁶⁷

Around 1730 AD, Mbura, Hua, Naong, and Lilo decided to sail to Batavia or Matabi (currently known as Jakarta) to seek wisdom and knowledge (*sangga ndolu sio do tungga lela falu*).⁶⁸ In Batavia, they studied religion, education, agricultural technology, the technology of making distilled palm wine (*sopi*) and fishing. Mbura, the King of *nusak* Thie, was baptized in Batavia and got a new Christian name, Benyamin Messakh. After studying in Batavia for almost two years, they decided to return to Rote. In a farewell ceremony, the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies gave them some presents.⁶⁹

Those who adhere to the idea that the return of these educated kings from Batavia to Rote contributed to the education, as well as the vocational skills of the Rotenese people, usually refer to the following *bini*:

*Lanoli sala sele ngali hadi,
Ma naka boi nasa mao bana ma iak.
Lanolin sala nasu mina ai fula;*

The four kings were taught to plant the rice,
To herd the cattle and to nurture fish.
They were taught to distill eucalyptus and alcohol,

⁶⁷ There are no dates available concerning the rulerships of Ndi'i Hua, Ndara Naong and Toudengga Lilo.

⁶⁸ Along with these kings, there were about 23 more people. They were primarily the clan heads of *nusak* Thie (Karim et al. 2012, 11). According to a *bini* (Mboeik 1985, 121, 157), only Ndi'i Hua and Foe Mbura successfully arrived in Jakarta and had studied there for two years; whereas Toudenga Lilo and Ndara Naong had never reached Jakarta.

⁶⁹ The souvenirs they received from the Governor-General of the Dutch Indies included: golden-headed stick with Benyamin's name written on it, some Bibles, books of Psalms, Hymnals, writing books, papers, pencils, pens, chalk, gold, money, clothes, an honorary hat, household items, tools for carpenters, masons and blacksmiths.

Ma ala lonalisa tuka ai ma tuka besi.

They were taught woodcarving and iron-making.

*Kateek lanolisala salanik hihin ma nanaun,
De ala tuke tein ma ala sale dalen.*

Finally, they were taught about Christianity,
So that they confessed their sins and repented
(Mboeik 1985, 121, 156).

In fact, the first school was established by Mbura in Fiulain, the subdistrict of Southwest Rote, in 1732.⁷⁰ Because of his actions, Mbura was called “the light bringer to the island of Rote” (“*manggaledok ma manggadilak soa neu nusa Rote*”) (Karim et al. 2012, 12).

The other theory is that gong making on Rote began between the 1930s and 1940s, particularly after the return of Yeremias Ledoh from Kupang (West Timor). Yeremias Ledoh is a grandson of Paulus Koutjie Ledoh (a scribe of King Dengka in the late 1800s). The Dutch Government was interested in sending Paulus Koutjie Ledoh to Jakarta to learn how to make weapons. Later on, the old Ledoh sent his two sons—one being Daud Ledoh, the father of Yeremias Ledoh—to take his place. Yeremias Ledoh inherited the talents and skills in iron crafting from his father and uncle.

In the 1930s, Yeremias Ledoh, who spent his youth in Kupang, was invited by a Chinese entrepreneur who lived in Kuanino, Kupang. This Chinese entrepreneur was interested in producing the gong and marketing it around Kupang. There are two versions of the tale about with whom Ledoh worked in the gong industry run by this Chinese entrepreneur. According to

⁷⁰ The date of the kings’ departure to Jakarta according to this following *bini*: “*Na teuk do tak telu doden leme Matabi daen di Olana Oen, leu Tunga ndolu ma leu sanga lela, kema nai teuk 1617 ala le’a lala baluk paon fo Sanga Ndolu*” (For three years they stayed in Matabi [currently, Jakarta], in the land of the Dutch, seeking wisdom and knowledge; and in 1617 they began their journey to Jakarta using a sailboat named *Sanga Ndolu*)(Mboeik 1985, 122, 157). This does not match with the information I gathered from my research participants (cf. Nalle 2015b; Sjoen 2015; Therik 2015) and from secondary sources (cf. Adoe 2013, 112; Karim et al. 2012, 11) as well. It is significant because it relates to the whole story—the years of study and the establishment of the first school at Fiulain. Since there are more people suggesting the 1730s as the date of the kings’ departure to Jakarta, and 1732 as the date of the first school on Rote established, it is more reasonable to suggest the 1730s as the time when the first school on Rote was founded.

Elias Ledoh, besides his father, there was another blacksmith from Rote, Saul Lalay (Ledoh 2015a). In an interview with Daud Selly (2015), however, he mentioned two completely different names: Darius Tallo from Faeanak, Temas Village, and Daud Hilly from Mundik, Lidor Village. Both villages are located in the subdistrict of Northwest Rote.

According to Ledoh, these two blacksmiths (i.e., Yeremias Ledoh and Saul Lalay); or according to Selly, the three blacksmiths (i.e., Yeremias Ledoh, Darius Tallo and Daud Hilly) worked in the Sembunyi (hiding) River area to guard their secret. The iron materials used in making gongs were taken initially from bridge plates but, when it became difficult to obtain these, they used old oil drums made in the Netherlands. After working for a while in the gong industry, Ledoh decided to return to Rote to open craft businesses in Ingguinak Village in the subdistrict of Northwest Rote.

6.7.2. Discussion on the Origins of the Bronze Gong, the *Meko Lilok* and the *Meko Besik*

In the sixteenth century, bronze gongs were considered a crucial export commodity by Javanese traders, particularly to places like Borneo, Bali, the Lesser Sundas (comprising of West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara and southern part of Maluku) and Maluku (Reid 1993, 119). In Java and many other places in Indonesia, bronze gongs were considered highly valued possessions not only because of their superior utility but because of their supernatural associations (Spiller 2004, 57). As bronze gongs were not affordable for common people, they became a privilege of the wealthy (Spiller 2004, 6). It was common in East Nusa Tenggara regions (for instance Rote) to use a gong set for dowry. According to Lau (2015), a gong set (*meko lalanggak esa*) in those days was equal to the value of a buffalo or a woman.

As early as 300 AD, Javanese metalworkers had developed the technology of gong making and created some new types of gongs, including bronze knobbed gongs (Hood 1980 in Spiller

2004, 48). By the sixteenth century, the largest gong foundry in Java was located in Gresik, a city near Surabaya, East Java (Reid 1993, 119). In an interview with Yermias Pah (2016), he mentioned *Rek Ayo Rek*, an East Javanese song, sung by Central Javanese traders, but I believe he confused Central Java and East Java. He explained to me that gongs were brought by Javanese traders from Semarang, Central Java, but then he illustrated his story by singing a very popular East Javanese folksong, *Rek, Ayo Rek*.⁷¹ It seems to me that Pah confused East Javanese traders with Central Javanese traders, because it is quite common for many Indonesians that the word “Javanese” includes East and Central Javanese people.

Most of my research participants (e.g., Ledoh 2015b; Fanggidae 2015a; Selly 2015; Ledoh 2015a; Sjoen 2015; Mesah 2015; Lusi-Nggebu 2015; Nalle 2015b) did not mention bronze gongs in their interviews. Rather, they talked about the brass gongs (the *meko lilok*). It might be true because, in general, bronze items belonged to the elite class, while brass ones were commonly found among ordinary people.

Most bronze and brass gongs in Rote disappeared during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia during World War Two (1942 - 1945) (Basile 2003, 57). To replace the gongs confiscated by the Japanese for the war, the Rotenese began their iron gong industry after the Second World War. Iron was preferred to bronze and brass because it was relatively easy to find on Rote, in particular from used drums or bridge frameworks (Ledoh 2015a).

Although the return of the four Rotenese kings from Batavia has been associated with the beginning of the gong industry on Rote, it is difficult to trace its exact history since no physical evidence remains. None of my research participants were able to show me the places on Rote (other than *nusak Dengka*) where gong manufacturing occurred.

⁷¹ It is very likely that Pah intended to associate East Java traders with gongs, but he misquoted it.

It is plausible to suggest that bronze gongs and the *meko lilok* were brought to Rote either by Javanese, Makassarese or Arab traders between the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, as bronze drums were used throughout Southeast Asia (including Rote) since 1730 (Miller and Williams 2008b, 58). If, in 1730, bronze drums were used in Rote, there is a possibility that, at least in the same year, bronze gongs were used in Rote too. The reason for this is because they were both bronze items and considered as valuable export commodities by traders.

The *meko besik* manufacturing began in Oenaek Kampong, Inguinak Village, *nusak* Dengka in the 1930s with the return of Yermias Ledoh from Kupang (Ledoh 2015a). Ledoh used bridge plates and oil drums made in the Netherlands. Ledoh handed down his knowledge and skills in gong making to one of his sons, Elias Ledoh. In the 2000s, his youngest son, Herman Ledoh, decided to start his own small-scale gong enterprise in Busalangga Urban Village, in the subdistrict of Northwest Rote. The youngest Ledoh has been considered the pioneer of modern gong making on Rote.

6.8. Summary

In general, the history of the *sasandu* and the Rotenese gong (the *meko*) can be divided into two contrasting groups. The first group asserts that the invention of the *sasandu* predated the *meko*. This argument is based on the variety of music that is played on the *meko*.⁷² If the gong had existed earlier throughout the East Nusa Tenggara regions, then gong music should have developed as well. In short, it is claimed that the *sasandu* has become a significant factor in

⁷² Rotenese gong music has the largest repertoire compared to other regions. During my research on Rote, I have collected at least forty to fifty pieces of gong music (*li*).

differentiating the Rotenese gong music repertoire from that of other islands within the East Nusa Tenggara.⁷³

In contrast, the second group argues that the *meko*—in this case, the wooden gong (the *meko ai*) and the bamboo gong (the *meko o*)—were founded long before the invention of the *sasandu*. The brass gong (the *meko lilok*) and the iron gong (the *meko besik*) came later, after the *sasandu* was founded. The coming of the *meko lilok* and the *meko besik* have been associated with trade. This argument rests on three points: 1) the term *sasandu gong* implies that the *sasandu* is tuned in accordance with the Rotenese gong tuning system; 2) the *sasandu*, played by one player, is essentially a reduction of a *meko* set played by five to seven players; and 3) the *meko* and the *tambur/la'bu* as a metaphor for sea waves is included in a Rotenese poetic language saying as follows: “*Posi makamu meko, ma'unu mali labu na*” (“the sound of the waves crashing against the reef, resounding like a gong and *tambur* being played”) (Nalle 2015a).

In the absence of any written history, it is impossible to assert any exact dates for this reconstructed history of the *sasandu* and the *meko*, though. The most reliable way of reconstructing the history of these Rotenese musical instruments is by linking them to a wider

⁷³ Herman Ledoh (2015b) asserts that, in Rote, there are more than thirty pieces of gong music. He explains further by saying that Sumbanese possess three pieces of gong music, whereas Savunese and Timorese each owns a piece of gong music. To clarify the accuracy of Ledoh's assertion, I have asked some of my colleagues from those regions. For example, in a personal communication with Agustinus Bedaama (a Florinese born music anthropologist from Widya Mandira Catholic University in Kupang) on September 30, 2016, he explains to me that Flores is divided into several subdistricts, and each district has its own gong music. In Manggarai, for example, there are *Takitu*, *Kedindik*, *Ndudundake*, and *Mbata Mbetung*; in Ngada: *Beghu* (bamboo gong); in Sikka: *Gong Waning*; in East Flores: *Hedung*, *Tena Lolon*, and *Enene*. In Sabu there is only a piece of gong music, known as *Ledo Hau*. In Sumba there are *Woleka* and *Kataga*, whereas in Timor there is *Leku Sene*. In a personal communication with Risparia Ranggambani (a secretary at the Office of Culture and Tourism in the Subdistrict of East Sumba) on September 4, 2016, she explains that the East Sumbanese have some gong music (e.g., *Katala*, *Nggaha*, *Kadambungu*, *Katailungu*, and *Kahaungu*); in Central Sumba there are *Mamauli*, *Pakimangu*, *Pahilungu*, *Kabokangu*, *Katutuk* and *Nggaha*; whereas in West Sumba and Southwest Sumba there are *Kabonguka*, *Kawuheka*, *Pambale*, *Pambale Tilu*, *Kanduruka Kii* and *Kanduruka Kalada*. This information breaks Ledoh's argument that Rotenese gong music is more varied than other regions.

historical and musical contexts, for instance, any information relevant to the East Nusa Tenggara trade and commerce from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. Based on this data, in this chapter it can be argued that: 1) the *meko*, *tambur* and the *sasandu* are not musical instruments unique to Rote. Bamboo and wooden xylophones, stick percussions, and heterochord bamboo tube zithers are instruments common throughout Southeast Asia; 2) the term “*meko*” was originally applied to wooden and the bamboo xylophones, but later was adapted for imported metal gongs; 3) the *sasandu* was originally an idiochord tube zither that was later transformed to a heterochord tube zither; and 4) the *meko ai/o* and the *tambur* predated the *sasandu*; metal gongs came later.

The *sasandu* was previously named “*depo hitu*” (“seven strings”) because it consisted of seven strings. Later in its development, more strings have been added. Therefore, the term “*depo hitu*” is specifically labeled to the *sasandu* and not to the *meko* which was from the beginning nine gongs or bars.

Chapter 7 *MEKO* MUSIC

7.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the differences between *meko* music from the eastern and the western parts of Rote. *Meko* music from East Rote is characterized by solemnity and slow tempo, whereas *meko* playing from the West is typified by faster tempo and louder sound (Saudale 2015, 57; Hilly 2015; Haning 2015a; Feoh 2015). These research informants assert that *meko* playing reflects the characters of its users. Solemn and moderately slow music, which are the indicators of East Rotenese gong music, reflect the soft-heartedness and shyness of the people of the East Rote. In contrast, the straightforward and dynamic personality of people of the West Rote is reflected through fast tempo and loud *meko* playing.

Furthermore, “knowledge” has been associated with the people of East Rote, whereas “swords” with the people of West Rote (Therik 2015). Swords symbolize aggressiveness and violence, while knowledge refers to peacefulness and prosperity. In fact, West Rote was previously known for its *nusak* warfare, in particular between *nusak* Thie and Dengka. Because of this long war, these two *nusak* were cynically dubbed: “*Dengka tafa naak, ma Thie boke boa*” (“People from Dengka are defeated by swords, and people from Thie are plunging into the sea”) (Adeo 2013, 66).

Unfortunately, when it comes to listing the elements of differences between *meko* playing in East and West Rote, neither Saudale, Hilly, Haning or Feoh were able to go more deeply into detail. Tempo and the level of loudness are the only musical elements they recognize so far. According to Fanggidae (2015b), the tempo of *meko* music will be determined by the speed of the swinging arm when striking the gong. Based on the speed of the arm when striking the gong,

meko music of West Rote is considered as the faster one, followed consecutively by Central Rote and East Rote.

Apart from these two musical elements, Samuel Fanggidae (2015a) and Lens Haning (2015a) assert that the differences between East and West are observable in *Kakamusu*.⁷⁴ The dancers in East Rote will raise their shins no higher than their knees, whereas on West Rote, the dancers will elevate their shins higher than their knees (Haning 2015a) in fast tempo (Feoh 2015).

The differences in *meko* playing between East and West Rote have led me to a discussion on place, identity, authenticity and change. These four themes are interrelated especially in the context of Rotenese *meko* playing. Prior to discussing these four fundamental themes, transcription or musical notation is also discussed briefly.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: 1) Introduction; 2) Aims and Limitations; 3) Transcription; 4) Place, Identity, Authenticity and Change; 5) Three Traditional Styles of Rotenese *Meko* Music are divided into: a) *Li Kakamusu*; b) *Li Mudipapa*; and c) *Li Tai Benu*; 6) Comparing *Meko* Music between East and West Rote is subdivided into: a) Several Musical Traits of Rotenese *Meko* Music; b) Comparing *Li Kakamusu* of Temas Village and Eahun Kampong; c) Comparing *Li Mudipapa* of Temas Village and Eahun Kampong; and d) Comparing *Li Tai Benu* of Temas Village, Eahun Kampong, Oenitas Village and *Nusa Tua Meni* Music and Dance Studio; and 7) Summary.

⁷⁴ A war dance that describes a fortress which is built to protect its people from their enemies. This dance is intended as a preparation for adult men in the village for the *nusak* war to come (Selly 2015).

7.2. Aims and Limitations

This chapter has two aims. First, it is to examine whether the differences in *meko* playing between East and West Rote as observed by Saudale, Hilly, Haning and Feoh are obvious. The examination is conducted by comparing the tuning, tempo, order of gong playing, and the rhythm of two selected styles of *meko* music (i.e., *Li Kakamusu* and *Li Mudipapa*) played by two *meko* ensembles each representing eastern and western territories. West Rote is represented by Temas Village, while East Rote is represented by Eahun *Kampong*.

Second, it is to examine my research participants' perceptions of musical differences in *meko* playing between “traditional” and the “new creation” pieces. For the purpose of the second aim, I will compare and contrast the playing of *Li Tai Benu* from Temas Village, Eahun *Kampong*, Oenitas Village and *Nusa Tua Meni* Music and Dance Studio in Ba'a. Oenitas Village is included in this discussion because it has been claimed by Esau Nalle (2015a) as the place of origin for *Li Tai Benu*. *Nusa Tua Meni* Music and Dance Studio is known for its persistence in developing the “new art creation.”⁷⁵

As it would be impossible to compare and contrast the entire gong music repertoire, I decided to limit my selection to three pieces of gong music (i.e., *Li Kakamusu*, *Li Mudipapa* and *Li Tai Benu*). *Li Kakamusu* represents the *Fofotik*⁷⁶ category; while *Li Mudipapa* and *Li Tai Benu* represent the *Lendo*⁷⁷ category. Based on my research observation, these three pieces of dance music are found in most locations that have gong music in Rote.

⁷⁵ This term is used nationwide from 1950 onwards, especially in referring to new instrumental and dance compositions that are linked to traditional form with some innovations (Harnish 2000, 12).

⁷⁶ Dances that are characterized by agile and energetic movements.

⁷⁷ Dances that are characterized by patterned, rhythmical and gentle movements.

Scores for analysis are musical transcriptions of the *meko* recordings, which were collected during field study from one region in East Rote (i.e., Lodalusi Urban Village in the subdistrict of East Rote) and in West Rote (i.e., Temas Village in the subdistrict of Northwest Rote). Eahun Subvillage in *nusak* Ringgou and Temas Village in *nusak* Dengka were chosen for two reasons: 1) *meko* playing is still very much alive in these two places;⁷⁸ and 2) some accomplished *meko* performers from these places are still alive.⁷⁹

I acknowledge one limitation of this research, namely: the variability of information presented by my research participants, particularly in relation to *meko* playing. There are at least three areas in which my research participants differ one from another, namely: the number of *meko* music pieces, the historical background of some *meko* music and the order of *meko* playing.⁸⁰

Concerning the number of *meko* music pieces, there have been some differing opinions. Herman Ledoh (2015b) estimates there are approximately thirty pieces of *meko* music; Yusuf Mesah (2015) estimates twenty seven pieces; or twenty five pieces according to Esau Nalle (2015a). There are at least two reasons why this happens: 1) the new pieces of *meko* music composed in the East are unknown to musicians from the West and vice versa; and 2) some varieties in the naming of the same pieces of *meko* music in the East and the West. For instance, *Li Mudipapa*, a term popular among musicians from *nusak* Dengka, is called *Li Ne'e Seselu* or *Li Neketototok* in *nusak* Thie and *Li Ronggeng* or *Li Roroke* in East Rote. Based on my field

⁷⁸ *Meko* music is still performed at weddings and funerals.

⁷⁹ For instance, Tobias Tunga, Obi Elimanafe, Gerson Tunga and Imanuel Danon from Temas Village; Bernadus Natuk, Laurens Natuk, Steven Lada and Volkes Natuk from Eahun Kampong.

⁸⁰ One of the reasons for this is *meko* playing has been taken for granted, so that when an outsider like myself asks about the order of playing, it may cause difficulty for the *meko* performers to respond. My research participants usually would do some simulation before explaining the order of gong playing to me. Sometimes they would correct their answers as the playing began.

observations in Rote, *meko* music pieces that are considered popular to most Rotenese musicians are: *Li Kakamusu*, *Li Kaka Filandak*, *Li Bobouk*, *Li Hela*, *Li Basili*, *Tai Benu*, *Te'o Renda*, *Te'o Tonak*, *Li Mudipapa*, *Li Ndao*, *Li Batu Matia*, *Li Enggalutu* and *Li Dede Kode*.

There is some disagreement among my research participants about the history of some *meko* music pieces. For instance, there are at least two versions of *Li Te'o Renda* (meaning *An Aunt Doing Crochet*). This piece was possibly composed in the beginning of twentieth century during the Dutch occupation in Rote. The Dutch government introduced Western clothes to Rotenese women to supplant local clothing made of *gewang* (*Corypha Gebanga*) leaves. The amazement of Rotenese men watching Rotenese ladies wearing Western clothing, in particular bras decorated with lace, is represented through *Li Te'o Renda* (Nalle 2015a). According to Haning (2009e), the composing of *Li Te'o Renda* was inspired by the popularity of lacy camisoles among Rotenese women. During Dutch colonization in Rote, many women loved to wear lacy camisoles when attending ceremonies.

There have been some differences of opinion regarding the order of gong playing (e.g., *li Te'o Tonak*). I observed that there are at least three versions of the order of gong playing: 1) the *leko*, the *paiseli*, the *ana laik* and the *ana daek*, the *nggasa laik* and the *nggasa daek*, the *ina taladak*, the *tambur* (Selly 2015); 2) the *nggasa laik*, the *leko*, the *paiseli*, the *nggasa daek*, the *ana laik* and the *ana daek*, the *ina taladak*, the *tambur* (Dama 2015); and 3) the *leko*, the *nggasa laik* and the *nggasa daek*, the *paiseli*, the *ana laik* and the *ana daek*, the *ina taladak*, and the *tambur* (Pellando'u 2015).

As the primary aim of this chapter is to examine the issue of musical geography between the eastern and the western parts of Rote through transcribed *meko* music recordings, it is necessary to discuss transcription as a tool of music analysis.

7.3. Transcription

Transcription can be understood as the visual representation of recorded sound (List 1974, 353). Two kinds of transcriptions are: 1) musical notation, and 2) graphic notation. The former is a transcription made by ear and hand, while the latter is a transcription produced by an electronic device (List 1974, 353).

Until the 1950s, ethnomusicologists were expected to have the ability to transcribe any available recorded music (Nettl 2005, 76). Scholars like Bartok (1951), Seeger (1958), Merriam (1964) and List (1974) are all convinced that transcribing is an indispensable research skill, but at the same time they are aware of the limitation of transcription as visual parameter to represent the full auditory parameter of music. Bergeijk (1958, 101) comments, “It is humanly impossible to hear a very complicated sound as a collection of separate frequency components.” Later on, an automatic transcription reader was invented to solve this problem. On the one hand, an automatic transcriber can help the ethnomusicologist to show inaudible sound (Jairazbhoy 1977b, 265), on the other hand, it cannot produce an “objective” sound or the sound as we hear. One of the reasons is because “all our music has been structured on the basis of what we hear, the subjective and distorted rather than the “objective” (Jairazbhoy 1977b, 265).

Although the use of transcription in ethnomusicological research has been declining since the 1980s, its functions as a tool of analysis and communication (Widdess 1994, 59), as well as another way to learn musical style (Estreicher in McColleston 1960, 129), are still significant. In examining the differences between *meko* playing in the eastern and western territories, I run a comparative study using descriptive notation⁸¹ as a tool of analysis.

⁸¹ The outsider record of a specific performance he/she heard (Seeger 1958, 184). On the contrary, prescriptive notation refers to “a blue-print of how a specific piece of music shall be made to sound” (Seeger 1958, 184). Prescriptive notation is the insider notation.

In the following section, topics on place, identity, authenticity and change will be discussed briefly. These topics are included in this chapter because they were noticeable during my fieldwork.

7.4. Place, Identity, Authenticity and Change

Notions of place, identity and authenticity can be interrelated. According to Stokes (1994, 3), “music informs our sense of place.” Through music we locate ourselves in particular places and identify ourselves in relation with others. In the context of Indonesia, whenever we hear the sound of the *sasandu* it automatically brings our imagination to the small island of Rote which is located in East Nusa Tenggara Province.

Sara Cohen (1994) provides an example of how music, place and identity are interrelated. In her writing on the “Liverpool sound,” Cohen (1994) refers to a very specific sound that distinguishes Liverpool musically, culturally and geographically from its neighboring cities (e.g., Manchester and Coventry). Although Liverpool is ethnically diverse, the “Liverpool sound”⁸² has been associated with one ethnic group, that is the “white rock sound” (Cohen 1994, 123). The “white rock sound” then creates an image of Liverpool.

Another example is taken from my visit to Hongkong Disneyland in February 2018. The first time I stepped into the entrance, my imagination was brought to experience the grandeur of Disney tradition. A clear atmosphere of American culture was created through music (e.g., marching bands, jazz ensembles and orchestras), stores, shows, rides, parades, hanging banners and signs written in English. But at the same time I also could sense the locality of this American theme park through the background music of *guzheng* (a Chinese zither-like instrument with at

⁸² Characterized by melodic, harmonious and romantic music.

least eighteen strings and movable bridges, played with a plectrum), which was played in some locations.

Prior to discussing the notion of musical geography between the eastern and the western parts of Rote, it is necessary to discuss some factors that relate to the understanding of this division (i.e., geography, philosophy and social). Geographically, the island of Rote is a mixture of hilly (32 hectares) and flat lands (45 hectares) with a declivity level of around 45 degrees. Being located in tropical region, Rote has two seasons: dry and wet. The rainy season lasts for three to four months only (i.e., December to March or April), while the dry season is longer in period of time (May to November). Rote's temperature is very humid (85 percent) and warm, even during the dry season. Temperatures range approximately from 17 degrees celsius (the lowest) to 34 degrees celsius (the highest). Based on the geographical differences, the island of Rote is divided into two territorial divisions:⁸³ the East and the West. The eastern part of the island was known for its fine ricefields and the western part was known for its herds of livestock. Fox (1968, 7) considers East Rotenese pastoralists and West Rotenese agriculturalists. East Rote is called "*Lamak-anan*" ("the children of Lamak"⁸⁴) or for most Indonesians "*matahari terbit*" ("sunrise"), whereas West Rote is called "*Hendak-anan*" ("the children of Hendak"⁸⁵) or "*matahari terbenam*" ("sunset") (Fox 1968, 5).

As has been discussed in detail in Chapter Five, the Rotenese social system is governed by the dyadic and triadic systems. They include, for instance, numbers, cardinal directions, parts of the body and coordinates. Regarding cardinal directions, East is superior to the West, as sunrise

⁸³ I adopt the term used by Fox (1968, 5) in his dissertation.

⁸⁴ *Lamak* means "grasshopper."

⁸⁵ *Hendak* means "pandanus."

is to sunset. East also refers to the head and West to the tail.⁸⁶ The people of East Rote have been associated with great ability in *bini*, while the people of West Rote have been attributed to the knowledge of making pottery, skills in tapping *lontar* palms, and cooking sugar *lontar* (Fox 1968, 6).

Socially, each *nusak* was comprised of tribes (*leo*). A *leo* is a group of people from the same ancestors who lives together in one or several villages. A strong emotional bond between the members of one *leo* has led into “*ego leo sentris*” (“*leo* egocentrism”) (Adeo 2013, 63), which was characterized by a claim that their *leo* was superior to other *leo*. At a higher level *leo* egocentrism shifts to *nusak* egocentrism. More or less, wars between *nusak* were a corollary of this egocentrism. Interestingly, in the history of Rotenese *nusak* warfare, it happened more frequently in West Rote instead of in East Rote.

In relation to identity construction, music plays a very important role (e.g., Baily 1994; Hnaraki 2011; Marcano 2011). Music is meaningful because it provides a means to acknowledge identities and places (Stokes 1994, 5). Gongs, which were not originally from the island, have been adopted by the Rotenese and made their own. Rotenese people have used these gongs to recognize differences and social boundaries between East and West Rote. Through *meko* playing the East Rotenese and West Rotenese locate themselves in two contrasting settings. The pastoral characteristics of the East Rotenese and the agricultural characteristics of the West Rotenese find its justification in *meko* playing. Peoples from West Rote and East Rote distinguish themselves as musically different from one another through tempo and dynamics.

⁸⁶ In some informal conversations with Rotenese people, the head is always associated with authority, whereas the tail refers to powerlessness. In a discussion on the heads and tails of a coin, Hart (1986, 638) also associates heads with political authority and tails with commodity.

The term “authenticity” itself is problematic, because it might address the music (e.g., the accuracy of the score, the tuning, the tempo, the dynamics and the articulations); the performance (e.g., the performers, the musical instruments and the properties used for the performance); and sometimes it might be a judgment made by the musician, the audience or a third person (e.g., critic). In general, the word “authenticity” in music has been associated with it being “historically correct” (the 1950s and 1960s) and within “an original context” by ethnomusicologists from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s (Schippers 2010, 47).

There are multiple definitions of the term authenticity, and I will discuss some definitions which are relevant to my research context. First, the term “authenticity” refers to the way that a music community differentiates itself from others (Stokes 1994, 6-7). Stokes’ definition about authenticity is similar to the definition of “identity,” for instance, the consciousness of a person about similarities, feeling of continuity and differences from others (Ruud 1997, 5). Stokes’ definition is applicable to the context of Rote, primarily in relation to Nalle’s (2015b) statement on the origin of *Li Tai Benu* and the responses of some Rotenese traditional musicians (e.g., Susana Lusi-Nggebu, Antonia Magdalena Mooy and Anderias Thonak) toward the emergence of “new art creation.”

Secondly, authenticity refers to “the consistent representation of the origins of a piece (or a style of a genre) in subsequent versions or at later moments in the tradition’s chronology; with regard to those aspects that are salient, the piece remains the piece” (Bohlman 1988, 10). Although to some extent Bohlman’s understanding of authenticity is still applicable in Rotenese context, at least two fundamental things have changed (i.e., transmission and performance context). In the method of transmission there has been a change from self-learning to instructor-assisted learning; whereas in the performance context, it is not mandatory to perform gong music

at weddings or funerals. There have been some changes in *meko* playing. For example, the three lowest gongs (i.e., the *meko ina*) are not suspended on a bamboo rod or a tree trunk carried on the shoulders of two men, instead these gongs are suspended vertically on a solid wooden frame.

If the word “authenticity” is used to mean the quality of being historically true or genuine, then it should be contested. Thinking of music (in particular traditional music) as an unchanging intangible cultural heritage is treating music as a museum artifact. To understand authenticity as an ascription, rather than an inscription, is helpful to ask who, rather than what, is being authenticated by that performance (Moore 2002, 220). By doing this we shift the issue from the music to the performer.

An understanding that traditional music is constantly changing and adjusting itself to the new demand leads to another theme, namely change. If authenticity focuses on the past, change focuses on the present. As Bohlman (1988, 10) argues, “theories of change, thus, concern themselves more with processes rather than with the products of an earlier time.” Still in relation to authenticity and a shift in the paradigm regarding authenticity, Sarah Rubidge attempts to link the past with the present. Rubidge (1996, 231) redefines authenticity as the reconstruction of the past and the reinterpretation of the today. By reconstructing the previous work we emphasize the historical legacy of the tradition, and by reinterpreting it we make the work relevant to the context of today’s performing arts. Authenticity is simply understood as giving a meaning to the old work in a new context. The continuity with the past is well kept, but at the same time makes the work intelligible to those living today.

The Rotenese “new art creation” might be perceived as an attempt made by some local musicians to reconstruct the past and at the same time reinterpret the present. To borrow Rubidge’s (1996, 231) statement, the authenticity of this new genre lies in the authentic world of

the work. It has nothing to do with the historical performance, rather the creativity and aesthetics of the performance.

Three traditional styles of Rotenese dance and music (i.e., *Li Kakamusu*, *Li Mudipapa* and *Li Tai Benu*) will be discussed in the next section. The information will include the categorization of these three dances, their historical backgrounds, their functions and their order of playing.

7.5. Three Traditional Styles of Rotenese Dance and Music

Li Kakamusu

Li Kakamusu belongs to the *fofotik* category along with *Li Bobouk Daek*, *Li Bobouk Laik*, *Li Bobouk Delak*, *Li Hela*, *Li Kaka Filandak* and *Li Basili*. This dance and music was choreographed with an intention to boost the spirit of the Thie's soldiers prior to the inter-*nusak* battle against Dengka (Nalle 2015a). According to Haning (2009e, 68), *Li Kakamusu* is currently performed: 1) to welcome the bride before entering the groom's house; 2) to welcome very special guests; and 3) for any other ritual ceremonies (e.g., funerals and weddings). *Li Kakamusu* is performed by a pair of male dancers, both holding swords in their hands. The dancers pretend to be two enemies standing face to face and seek the weakness of their rival in order to beat them (Haning 2009e, 67). The composer of *Li Kakamusu* is anonymous and it is not accompanied with lyrics (Nalle 2015a). The order of playing *Li Kakamusu* is as follows: the *meko nggasa laik* and the *meko nggasa daek*, the *meko leko*, the *meko paiseli*, the *meko ana laik* and the *meko ana daek*, the *meko ina* and the *tambur* (Selly 2015).

Li Mudipapa

Li Mudipapa, as well as *Li Te'o Renda*, *Li Te'o Tonak*, *Li Batu Matia*, *Li Tai Benu*, *Li Ndao*, *Li Ba'a*, *Li Oehandi*, *Li Savu*, and *Li Enggalutu*, are classified into the category of *Lendo*

dance and music. *Li Mudipapa* is a common term used by the people of *nusak* Rote, while people from other *nusak* call it *Li Ne'e Seselu* / *Neketototok* (Thie) or *Li Ronggeng* / *Li Roroke* (Ringgou, Oepao and Bilba). In general, *Ne'e Seselu* means “a question to answer” (Nalle 2015a), whereas *Neketototok* means “to adjust to the situation” (Mooy 2015). *Li Mudipapa* was usually danced in pairs and performed primarily during funerals, but today it is also performed at weddings (Haning 2009e, 50). The composer of *Li Mudipapa* is anonymous. Unlike *Li Kakamusu*, *Li Mudipapa* comes with lyrics (Nalle 2015a).

Dama's Version (Dama 2015)	Haning's Version (Haning 2009e, 51)	Pellando'u's Version (Pellando'u 2015)
The <i>meko leko</i> , the <i>meko paiseli</i> , the <i>meko ana laik</i> and the <i>meko ana daek</i> , the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> and the <i>meko nggasa daek</i> , the <i>meko ina</i> and the <i>tambur</i>	The <i>meko leko</i> , the <i>meko paiseli</i> , the <i>meko ana laik</i> , the <i>meko ana daek</i> and the <i>meko ana do'o dea</i> , the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> and the <i>meko nggasa daek</i> , the <i>meko ina</i> and the <i>tambur</i>	The <i>meko leko</i> , the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> and the <i>meko nggasa daek</i> , the <i>meko paiseli</i> , the <i>meko ana laik</i> and the <i>meko ana daek</i> , the <i>meko ina</i> and the <i>tambur</i>

Figure 7.1. The Playing Order of *Li Mudipapa*

In general, the order of gong playing suggested by Haning is similar to that of Dama's version. They differ in the number of gongs with the *meko ana do'o dea* added in Haning's. The *meko ana do'o dea* is gong number ten, which is optional in *meko* playing. Previously, the *meko ana do'o dea* was used in *meko* playing, but recently, when the number of *meko* performers declined, it became optional (Nalle 2015a).

Li Tai Benu

According to Nalle (2015a), the word “*Tai Benu*” means “weighted to one side.” This *li* was originally from *nusak* Oenale and composed during the Dengkanese invasion of *nusak* Oenale. The composing of this *li* was intended to criticize the unwise king of *nusak* Oenale, who tended to listen more to the family of his wife rather than to his own family. This unwise king

even ignored the counsels of his siblings to protect their territory from the invasion of his wife's family, who were from *nusak* Dengka.

Unlike Nalle, Daud Selly's (2015) narrative takes a non-royal setting. He associates *Tai Benu* with a visit made by the family of the bride to the house of the groom. He defines "*Tai Benu*" as "to weigh equally." This means that the relationship between the families of the bride and the groom should be based on equality. Like *Mudipapa*, the composer of *Tai Benu* is anonymous. This *li* is accompanied with lyrics (Nalle 2015a).

Dama's Version (Dama 2015)	Haning's Version (Haning 2009e, 52)
The <i>meko ana laik</i> and the <i>meko ana daek</i> , the <i>meko paiseli</i> and the <i>meko leko</i> , the <i>meko nggasa daek</i> and the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> , the <i>meko ina</i> and the <i>tambur</i>	The <i>meko ana laik</i> , the <i>meko paiseli</i> , the <i>meko ana daek</i> , the <i>meko leko</i> , the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> , the <i>meko nggasa daek</i> , the <i>meko ina</i> and the <i>tambur</i>

Figure 7.2. The Playing Order of *Li Tai Benu*

7.6. Comparing *Meko* Music between East and West Rote

7.6.1. Musical Traits of Rotenese Dance and Music

Like most Southeast Asian music, Rotenese dance music is characterized by two distinct musical traits: 1) the *ostinato* and 2) the interlocking of melodic patterns played on different instruments (Spiller 2004, 12 - 15). Ostinatos create the sense of "homeliness," whereas the interlocking emphasizes "debt as an element of social bond," in which social relationship is sustained through giving and receiving (Spiller 2004, 14-15). All Rotenese traditional music, including dance music, is in quadruple time.⁸⁷ Unlike Javanese and Balinese gong orchestras which are characterized by melodic instruments, Rotenese gong music does not acknowledge a main melody. Rather each gong in a *meko lalanggak esa* (a gong set) contributes equally to the

⁸⁷ It is unclear why no other meters are used, but I believe it is related to the characteristics of Rotenese dance movements.

whole gong playing. Playing loudly has been associated with: 1) enthusiasm (Fanggidae 2015b); 2) knocking at someone's door (Loloin 2015); and 3) making an announcement to the residents of the village (Tungga 2015). It is no surprise that Rotenese gongs produce loud sounds because: 1) most Rotenese gongs are made of iron instead of bronze; 2) its mallets are made of wood and are not padded at all.

The other features of *meko* music are as follows: 1) gongs are never played simultaneously, rather they are played in sequence usually starting from either the *meko leko* or the *meko nggasa*, and very rarely from the *meko ina* or the *meko ana*; 2) the *tambur* will never start the playing, rather it will come after all gongs have joined in; 3) the *tambur* will always join the playing when all gong performers have played their instruments correctly; 4) a command to stop the music will be given by the *tambur* performer; 5) the order of gong playing may vary from one piece of *meko* music to another; 6) the *meko ana*, the *meko leko* and the *meko nggasa* could be played in pairs or alone. If they are played in pairs, then the pairing might be of any combination of gongs (e.g., the *meko ana laik* and the *meko ana daek* or the *meko ana laik* and the *meko leko daek* [*paiseli*]); 7) the three pieces of the *meko ina* will always be played by one performer; 8) the *meko ina taladak* will always become the hub of the movement; and 9) the *meko ina taladak* and the *meko nggasa laik* are the only gongs that are played muted. Muted sounds have three functions: 1) artistic, that is, to create different sound color in *meko* playing (Therik 2015); 2) practical, that is, to signal the dancers when to change the movement of their feet (Sjioen 2015); and 3) symbolical, that is, to imitate the gentle voice of a mother who is coaxing her crying child (Penu 2015).

7.6.2. Comparing *Li Kakamusu* of Temas Village and Eahun Kampong

Venue and performers	Gong tuning	The order of gong playing and pairing	Tempo
Temas Village, the subdistrict of Northwest Rote	Bb2– D3 – Eb3 – G3 – A3 – Bb3/B3 – D4 – Eb4 – G4	The <i>meko nggasa dae</i> – the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> – the <i>meko leko laik</i> – the <i>meko leko dae</i> – the <i>meko ana laik</i> – the <i>meko ana dae</i> – the <i>meko ina taladak</i> – the <i>meko ina makamu</i> – the <i>meko ina tataik</i> – the <i>tambur</i> Pairing: the <i>meko nggasa dae</i> (at the bottom) and the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> (on top); the <i>meko leko laik</i> ; the <i>meko leko dae</i> ; the <i>meko ana laik</i> (at the bottom) and the <i>meko ana dae</i> (on top); the <i>meko ina taladak</i> , the <i>meko ina makamu</i> and the <i>meko ina tataik</i> .	160 beats per minute
Eahun Kampong, the subdistrict of East Rote	B2– D3 – E3 – G3 – A3 – B3 – D4/Eb4 – F4 – G4	The <i>meko nggasa dae</i> – the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> – the <i>meko leko laik</i> – the <i>meko leko dae</i> – the <i>meko ana laik</i> – the <i>meko ana dae</i> – the <i>meko ina taladak</i> – the <i>meko ina makamu</i> – the <i>meko ina tataik</i> – the <i>tambur</i> Pairing: the <i>meko nggasa dae</i> (at the bottom) and the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> (on top); the <i>meko leko laik</i> ; the <i>meko leko dae</i> ; the <i>meko ana laik</i> (on top) and the <i>meko ana dae</i> (at the bottom); the <i>meko ina taladak</i> , the <i>meko ina makamu</i> and the <i>meko ina tataik</i> .	125 beats per minute

Figure 7.3. The tuning, the playing order and the tempo of *Li Kakamusu* from Temas Village and Eahun Kampong

These two gong ensembles have two things in common: they both adopt a similar order of gong playing and pairing. The application of the dyadic system is clearly observed in this playing, in particular the notion of coordinate direction (i.e., *dae* [down or below] and *lai* [above or up]). For instance, the *meko nggasa dae* will always be positioned below the *meko nggasa laik* when they are played in pairs (see subsection 5.3.2. *The Dyadic System in Relation to Rotenese Concepts of Parallelism and Complementarity*).

Two observable differences of these two *meko* ensembles are: 1) the tuning,⁸⁸ and 2) the tempo. Teras *meko* playing moves at the speed of 160 beats per minute; whereas Eahun *meko* playing picks up twenty percent lower than Teras.

The next step is to analyze the rhythms between these two gong ensembles from the visualized video recordings. How much similarity or difference is found in the playing of *Li Kakamusu* between Teras and Eahun gong ensembles?

1 The *Meko ana*

Teras:



Eahun:



Although there are slight differences between the two (i.e., rhythms and the order of gongs played), both patterns are characterized by a basic rice-pounding rhythm (♪ ♪ ♪ ♪) representing the majority of the population who are farmers.

2 The *meko leko*

Desa Teras:



⁸⁸ It will be discussed later in the subsection 7.6.3. *Comparing Li Mudipapa of Teras Village and Eahun Kampong.*



Eahun:



Like the *meko ana*, the rhythm of the *meko leko* also adopts the rice-pounding style but the other way around. As we observe in these two *meko* ensembles, if the rhythm of the *meko ana* is straightforward, then the rhythm of the *meko leko* will be more decorated/ornamented and vice versa. For example, the plain rhythm of the *meko ana* of Eahun is varied with ornamented rhythms of the *meko leko*. In contrast, the more varied rhythm of the *meko ana* of Temas is balanced by the plain rhythmic pattern of the *meko leko*.

3 The *meko nggasa*

Temas:



Eahun:



Although they differ slightly one from another, they are both interconnected through the use of dotted rhythms.

4 The *meko ina*

Temas:



Eahun:



Although in the recording of Temas *meko* ensemble we hear that the *meko ina makamu* starts first, it normally begins with the *meko ina taladak*. This change is a result of gong recording for the ease of musical transcribing. It makes sense if we understand the basic principle of the triadic system. In such a system, the center is superior to right and left. Therefore, the *meko ina taladak*, which is situated in the center, is superior to the *meko ina makamu* and the *meko ina tataik* that surround it. Whereas, according to the dyadic system, right is superior to left. The *meko ina makamu*, which is on the right, is superior to the *meko ina tataik* placed on the left.

The *meko ina* of these two *meko* ensembles are connected by dotted eighth notes followed by a syncopated eighth note and two eighth notes (Temas); or syncopated sixteenth note and a combination of eighth and sixteenth notes (Eahun).

Temas



Eahun

5 The *tambur*

Temas:



Eahun:



Although in general the rhythms of these two *tambur* are completely different from one another, they are both interconnected by these following rhythms:

Temas:



Eahun:



In both Temas and Eahun *meko* playing the rhythms of the tambur correspond to the rhythms of the *meko ina*, and therefore create interesting interlocking rhythms. This is similar to that of the electric bass and kick drum in a combo band.

7.6.3. Comparing *Li Mudipapa* of Temas Village and Eahun Kampong

Venue and performers	Gong tuning	The order of gong playing and pairing	Tempo
Temas Village, the subdistrict of Northwest Rote	Bb2– D3 – Eb3 – G3 – A3 – Bb3/B3 – D4 – Eb4 – G4	The <i>meko leko laik</i> – the <i>meko leko dae</i> – the <i>meko ana dae</i> – the <i>meko ana laik</i> – the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> – the <i>meko nggasa dae</i> – the <i>meko ina taladak</i> – the <i>meko ina makamu</i> – the <i>meko ina tataik</i> – the <i>tambur</i> Pairing: the <i>meko leko laik</i> ; the <i>meko leko dae</i> ; the <i>meko ana dae</i> (at the bottom) and the <i>meko ana laik</i> (on top); the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> (on top) and the <i>meko nggasa dae</i> (at the bottom); the <i>meko ina taladak</i> , the <i>meko ina makamu</i> and the <i>meko ina tataik</i> .	74 beats per minute
Eahun Kampong, the subdistrict of East Rote	B2– D3 – E3 – G3 – A3 – B3 – D4/Eb4 – F4 – G4	The <i>meko leko laik</i> – the <i>meko leko dae</i> – the <i>meko ana dae</i> – the <i>meko ana laik</i> – the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> – the <i>meko nggasa dae</i> – the <i>meko ina taladak</i> – the <i>meko ina makamu</i> – the <i>meko ina tataik</i> – the <i>tambur</i>	83 beats per minute

		Pairing: the <i>meko leko laik</i> ; the <i>meko leko daek</i> ; the <i>meko ana dae</i> (at the bottom) and the <i>meko ana laik</i> (on top); the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> (on top) and the <i>meko nggasa dae</i> (at the bottom); the <i>meko ina taladak</i> , the <i>meko ina makamu</i> and the <i>meko ina tataik</i> .	
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Figure 7.4. The tuning, the playing order and the tempo of *Li Mudipapa* from Temas Village and Eahun Kampong

Both gong ensembles share the same order of gong playing and gong pairing. Although the tempos used by these two gong ensembles are slightly different, the differences are not significant. Surprisingly, the Eahun *meko* ensemble picks up tempo which is slightly faster than that of Temas. This fact might deny the argument that *meko* playing in West Rote is faster than East Rote.

1. The *meko ana*

Temas:



Eahun:



In general, both *meko* ensembles adopt the basic rice pounding rhythm, but in Temas ensemble the basic rhythm is constantly developed and varied, while in Eahun ensemble it stays steady for the whole piece.

2. The *meko leko*

Temas:



Eahun:



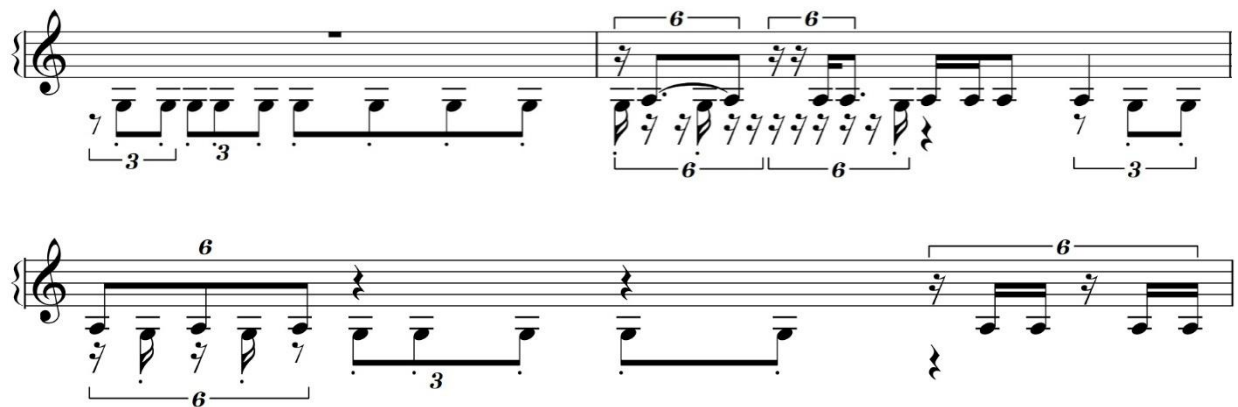
Both *meko leko laik* play exactly the same rhythm (the first two bars); whereas *meko leko dae* of these two ensembles play contrasting rhythms.

3. The *meko nggasa*

Temas:



Eahun:



At first, the rhythm of Temas the *meko nggasa* does not correspond with that of Eahun, but after careful scrutiny, they share one similar rhythm. The only difference is that the duration of Eahun the *meko leko daek* is longer than that of Temas.

Temas:



Eahun:

4. The *meko ina*

Temas:

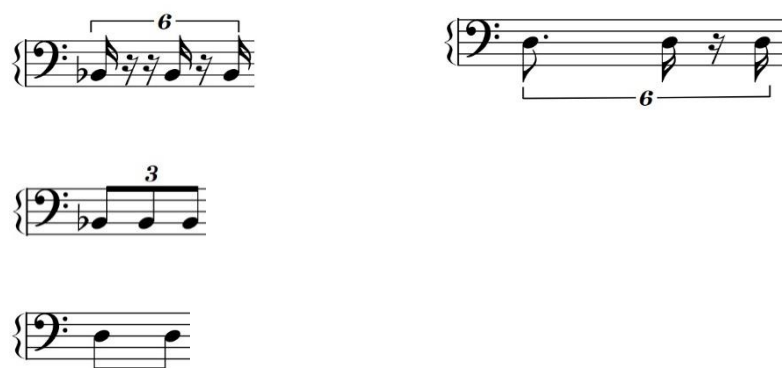


Eahun:





Regardless of some differences in rhythm, they are both correlated by three similar rhythms:



5. The *tambur*

Temas:





Eahun:



At a quick glance, the rhythms of these two *meko* ensembles contrast from each other, but principally they correspond to each other through duple, triple and sextuple rhythms.

7.6.4. Comparing *Li Tai Benu* of Temas Village, Eahun Kampong, Oenitas Village and *Nusa Tua Meni* Music and Dance Studio

In this subsection I compare and contrast a music dance piece known as *Li Tai Benu* from four places (i.e., Temas Village in the subdistrict of Northwest Rote, Eahun Kampong in the subdistrict of East Rote, Oenitas Village in the subdistrict of West Rote and *Nusa Tua Meni* Music and Dance Studio in the subdistrict of Lobalain).

Venue and performers	Gong tuning	The order of gong playing and pairing	Tempo
Temas Village, the subdistrict of Northwest Rote	Bb2– D3 – Eb3 – G3 – A3 – Bb3/B3 – D4 – Eb4 – G4	The <i>meko ana laik</i> – the <i>meko ana dae</i> – the <i>meko leko dae</i> – the <i>meko leko laik</i> – the <i>meko nggasa dae</i> – the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> – the <i>meko ina makamu</i> – the <i>meko ina taladak</i> – the <i>meko ina tataik</i> – the <i>tambur</i> Pairing: the <i>meko ana laik</i> ; the <i>meko ana dae</i> and the <i>meko leko dae</i> ; the <i>meko leko laik</i> ; the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> and the <i>meko nggasa dae</i> ; the <i>meko ina makamu</i> , the <i>meko ina taladak</i> and the <i>meko ina tataik</i> .	One hundred and ten beats per minute
Eahun Kampong, the subdistrict of East Rote	B2– D3 – E3 – G3 – A3 – B3 – D4/Eb4 – F4 – G4	The <i>meko ana laik</i> – the <i>meko ana dae</i> – the <i>meko leko dae</i> – the <i>meko leko laik</i> – the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> – the <i>meko nggasa dae</i> – the <i>meko ina tataik</i> – the <i>meko ina taladak</i> – the <i>meko ina makamu</i> – the <i>tambur</i> Pairing: the <i>meko ana laik</i> ; the <i>meko ana dae</i> ; the <i>meko leko laik</i> ; the <i>meko leko dae</i> ; the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> (on top) and the <i>meko nggasa dae</i> (at the bottom); the <i>meko ina tataik</i> , the <i>meko ina taladak</i> and the <i>meko ina makamu</i> .	One hundred and ten beats per minute
Oenitas Village, the subdistrict of West Rote	E3 – G3 – A3 – C4 – D4 – E4 – G4 – A4 – B4	The <i>meko ana laik</i> – the <i>meko ana dae</i> – the <i>meko leko dae</i> – the <i>meko leko laik</i> – the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> – the <i>meko nggasa dae</i> – the <i>meko ina tataik</i> – the <i>meko ina taladak</i> – the <i>meko ina makamu</i> – the <i>tambur</i> Pairing: the <i>meko ana laik</i> and the <i>meko ana dae</i> ; the <i>meko leko laik</i> ; the <i>meko leko dae</i> ; the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> ; the <i>meko nggasa dae</i> ; the <i>meko ina makamu</i> , the <i>meko ina taladak</i> and the <i>meko ina tataik</i> .	One hundred and ten beats per minute

<i>Nusa Tua Meni</i> Music and Dance Studio, the subdistrict of Lobalain	D3 – F3 – G3 – B3 – C4 – D4 – F4 – G4 – B4	The <i>meko ana laik</i> – the <i>meko ana dae</i> – the <i>meko leko dae</i> and the <i>meko leko laik</i> (they begin simultaneously) – the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> – the <i>meko nggasa dae</i> – the <i>meko ina taladak</i> – the <i>meko ina makamu</i> – the <i>meko ina tataik</i> – the <i>tambur</i> Pairing: the <i>meko ana laik</i> and the <i>meko ana dae</i> ; the <i>meko leko laik</i> ; the <i>meko leko dae</i> ; the <i>meko nggasa laik</i> ; the <i>meko nggasa dae</i> ; the <i>meko ina makamu</i> , the <i>meko ina taladak</i> and the <i>meko ina tataik</i> .	One hundred and twenty beats per minute
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Figure 7.5. The tuning, the playing order and the tempo of *Li Tai Benu* from Temas Village, Eahun Kampong, Oenitas Village and *Nusa Tua Meni* Music and Dance Studio

In general, the order of gong playing of these four *meko* ensembles is pretty much the same. Three observable exceptions are found in *Nusa Tua Meni meko* ensemble. First, the gongs are suspended on a wooden frame and arranged from left to right as follows: the *meko ina makamu*, the *meko ina tataik*, the *meko ina taladak*, the *meko nggasa laik*, the *meko nggasa dae*, the *meko leko laik*, the *meko leko dae*, the *meko ana laik* and the *meko ana dae*. The arrangement of notes models the Western keyboard instrument, with the lowest note placed on the farthest left and the highest one on the farthest right. This arrangement is completely different from the dyadic and triadic concepts that consider the lower-pitched gong is higher than the higher-pitched one. It is quite plausible that these young musicians are more familiar with the Western music tradition than with the concept of dyad and triad that underlies the reverse order of *meko* layout.

Second, the *meko nggasa laik* is not muted during the playing. This practice is unknown to the traditional *meko* playing. More information on the functions of mute playing is discussed on section 7.6.1. *Musical Traits of Rotenese Dance and Music*.

Finally, both the *meko leko* start simultaneously. This is also an unusual practice of *meko* playing. The common practice is to have each gong join in one by one, either beginning with high (*laik*) or low (*dae*) instruments.

Regarding gong tuning, none of these *meko* ensembles are tuned precisely according to the pentatonic scale similar to the “*Man Gong*” pentatonic scale: E – G – A – B – C. The tuning of Temas gongs is close to Ethiopian pentatonic scale known as “half *Tizita*” (C – D – Eb – G – Ab); the tuning of Eahun gongs falls into classification of “relative minor pentatonic” (C – Eb – F – Ab – Bb – C); the tuning of *Nusa Tua Meni* gongs represents the “pentatonic” dorian mode. Among these four *meko* ensembles, only Oenitas gong ensemble represents closeness to the “*Man Gong*” pentatonic scale, except the last high note falls on B instead of C.

Regarding the tempo, Temas, Eahun and Oenitas *meko* ensembles all move at the speed of 110 beats per minute. *Nusa Tua Meni* Music and Dance Studio runs at the tempo of 120 beats per minute which is ten percent faster than the other three *meko* ensembles. A very plausible explanation for this is that all the performers of *Nusa Tua Meni* Music and Dance Studio are younger musicians. Based on my observation during the recording, they enjoyed the playing, especially at a fast tempo. This fact is in line with research on the effects of tempo on children’s music preference conducted by LeBlanc (1983). LeBlanc’s (1983, 63) research results show that 96 percent of his research participants prefer fast tempo.

5. The *meko ana*

Temas:





Eahun:



Oenitas:



Nusa Tua Meni:



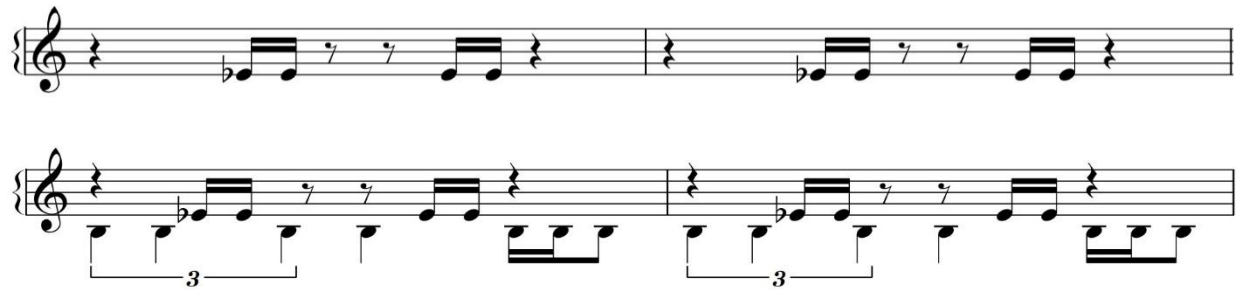
These four *meko* ensembles adopt a rice-pounding rhythm, which is developed through ornaments with *Nusa Tua Meni* as an exception. The rhythm of Temas' *meko leko laik* combines the *meko leko laik* rhythms of Eahun and Oenitas.

6. The *meko leko*

Temas:



Eahun:

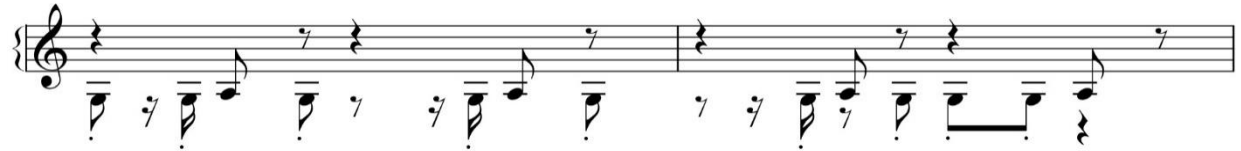


Oenitas:

*Nusa Tua Meni*:

Temas, Eahun and *Nusa Tua Meni*, all share two similar rhythms: a triple rhythm on the *meko leko laik* and a syncopated sixteenth note rhythm on the *meko leko dae*. Although the syncopated sixteenth note is present in the *meko leko laik* of Oenitas *meko* ensemble, the triple

Temas:



The first system of the musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is written on a single five-line staff with a treble clef. It contains two measures of music. The first measure consists of a quarter rest followed by a half note G4, a half note F4, and a quarter note E4. The second measure consists of a quarter note D4, a half note C4, and a quarter note B3. The notes are written on the lines and spaces of the staff: G on the first line, F on the first space, E on the second line, D on the second space, C on the third line, and B on the third space.

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and contains two measures of music. The bottom staff is in bass clef and also contains two measures of music. The melody in the top staff is: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4-G4 (beamed eighth notes), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (half). The bass line in the bottom staff is: G2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), B2 (quarter), A2-G2 (beamed eighth notes), F#2 (quarter), E2 (quarter), D2 (half). There are triplets indicated by a '3' and a bracket under the first three notes of both staves.

The first system of the musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is written on a single staff with a treble clef. It consists of two measures. The first measure contains a whole rest, followed by a quarter rest, and then a quarter note G4. The second measure contains a whole rest, followed by a quarter rest, and then a quarter note A4. The key signature is one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 4/4.

Temas *meko* ensemble shares the same rhythm with *Nusa Tua Meni*, but a rest is added to the *meko leko laik* of Temas. Both dotted notes fall on the first beat. This dotted note is also found in Oenitas *meko* ensemble, but it is on the *meko leko dae* instead of the *meko leko laik*.



Surprisingly, the rhythmic patterns of the *meko nggasa* and the *meko leko* of Oenitas are totally different from that of Teras, Eahun and *Nusa Tua Meni*.

8. The *meko ina*

Temas:



Eahun:

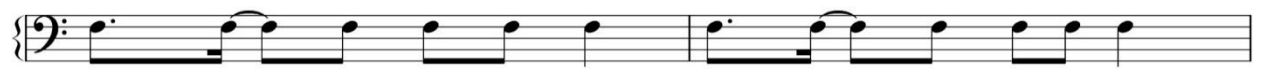




Oenitas:



Nusa Tua Meni:



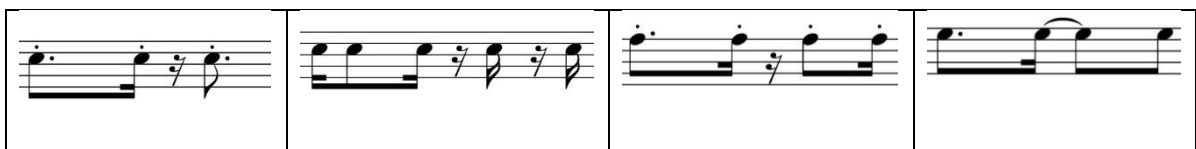
These four *meko* ensembles are characterized by quite similar rhythms which occur on the *meko taladak*, with *Nusa Tua Meni* as an exception.⁸⁹ The other exception is that *Nusa Tua Meni* uses eighth note syncopation on the second beat, while others use sixteenth note syncopation.

Temas

Eahun

Oenitas

Nusa Tua Meni



⁸⁹ The same rhythm is applied to the *meko ina*.

9. *Tambur*

Temas:



Eahun:

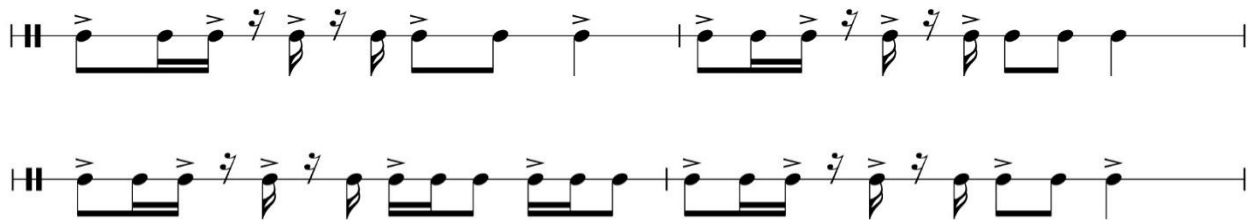


Oenitas:





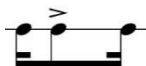
Nusa Tua Meni:



The *tambur* of these four *meko* ensembles correspond to each other through these following rhythms:



Another rhythm is only found in the *meko* ensembles of Temas, Eahun and Oenitas, and not in *Nusa Tua Meni*.



Regarding the timbre of the *tambur*, the Oenitas *tambur* is exceptional because it has three different layers of sound color (i.e., high, medium and low), whereas the other three *meko* ensembles only have one kind.

7.7. Summary

The musical analysis of these three *meko* reveal that musically there are no significant differences between the playing of these four *meko* ensembles. Based on the analysis of these

notated *meko* recordings, the claims that West Rotenese *meko* playing is faster in tempo and louder in volume than in the East Rote are not evident. In fact, the Eahun playing of *Li Mudipapa* is slightly faster than the playing of the Temas of the same music. Another fact is that the rhythms of *Li Tai Benu* of Oenitas the *meko leko* and the *meko nggasa* are in contrast to the same gongs of Temas, Eahun and *Nusa Tua Meni* has raised a question about the place of origin.

If they do differ from one another, it is primarily because of their distinct tunings. None of them share the same tuning. The most logical explanation for this is that these four *meko* sets were obtained from different providers. The *meko* sets from Temas Village, Eahun Kampong and Oenitas Village were possibly bought from Javanese or Arab traders who came to Rote since 1730 (Miller and Williams 2008b, 58); whereas the *meko* set owned by *Nusa Tua Meni* Music and Dance Studio was recently bought from Herman Ledoh, a gong builder from Busalangga Urban Village. Even if these four *meko* ensembles are to play similar rhythmic patterns, the sound would be different (for more details on the history of bronze gong and the *meko lilok*, look at Chapter Six).

In my analysis, I found more similarities in music between east and west Rote. For instance, 1) the *meko ana* from these four *meko* ensembles share the same rhythm known as “rice-pounding” rhythm; and 2) simple eighth-note, syncopated eighth-note, dotted, syncopated sixteenth-note and triple rhythms characterize the *meko* music of these four ensembles.

These socio-cultural factors have clearly illustrated that the differences between East and West Rote do not primarily lie on musical issues. The contrast between these two territories has its sources in the geography of the island and the socio-cultural aspects of Rotenese people. Musical geography differences are inferred later to justify these boundaries.

I argue that the emphasizing of musical geography between the eastern and the western parts of Rote is to underline the geographical and socio-cultural boundaries between these two

territories. It does not matter whether the differences between *meko* playing of East and West Rote are apparent or not, the basic idea is that the people of East Rote differ from the people of West Rote geographically, socially and musically.

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Chapter 8 The Sustainability of *Meko* and *Sasandu* Gong Playing in Rote

8.1. Introduction

The future of *meko* and *sasandu* gong playing in Rote is in question. There are at least two reasons for this. First, there seems to be a general lack of interest among young Rotenese regarding learning *meko* and *sasandu* playing. This has been pointed out by Therik from East Rote who blames popular music⁹⁰ for the changing of attitudes and behaviors toward *meko* playing among the younger generation of East Rotenese, in particular those who are studying outside Rote. Therik's argument is supported by Sjoen (2015), also from East Rote, and Fanggidae (2015b) from Central Rote. According to these three research participants, the youth are more interested in listening to and performing either Western or Indonesian popular music, rather than listening to or learning *meko* playing.

Second, the number of accomplished (highly skilled) *meko* and *sasandu* gong performers is declining. Some experts on *sasandu* and *meko* music have passed away or stopped performing these two Rotenese traditional instruments. For instance, Yusuf Nggebu, a *sasandu* and *meko* performer from *nusak Thie* who moved to Ba'a died in 2007 (Mooy 2016). While some other expert musicians who are still alive, such as Alexander Abednegu Malelak⁹¹ and Zeth Lami, have suffered strokes and are unable to play the *sasandu* and the *meko*.

In the midst of uncertainty and concern about the future of *meko* and *sasandu* playing, over the last three to four years there has been an attempt made by *Nusa Tua Meni* Music and Dance Studio in Ba'a to introduce a new genre, popularly known as "*Seni Kreasi Baru*" (*SKB*). This

⁹⁰ The term "popular" used in this chapter simply means "appealing to the people and is associated with commercial products of popular culture" (Shuker 2014, 3).

⁹¹ My interview with Alexander Malelak on February 16, 2017 was not successful because he could not understand my questions clearly. Although his wife and son attempted to make my questions clear to him, he was unable to answer. His son asked me to stop the interview due to this difficulty.

new genre aims at increasing the attractiveness and competitiveness of Rotenese traditional music and dance at regional and national competition level. In doing so, *Nusa Tua Meni* has been fully supported by the Rote-Ndao Office of Culture and Tourism. *SKB* has provoked debate among traditional musicians and ended up in three contrasting groups. The first group consisting of Jefri Nicksen Pah and Fransina Pah (2015), Feoh (2015) and Bako (2015a) believe that this new genre is the best way to raise the competitiveness of Rotenese traditional music and dance at both regional and national levels. *SKB* is expected to encourage youths to appreciate and participate in their traditional arts. The second group, consisting of Herman Ledoh (2015b), Susana Lusi-Nggebu (2015), Antonia Magdalena (2016) and Anderias Thonak (2016), disapprove of *SKB*, believing it is not representative of traditional Rotenese music and dance because the foreign elements instilled in it are quite significant (almost fifty percent of the total elements). The third group consisting of Yohanis B. Ndolu (2015) and Lens Haning⁹² (2015c), accept the idea of adopting some foreign elements and mixing them with the basic elements of Rotenese traditional music and dance as long as they do not deviate too greatly from the original forms.

The tension between those who adhere to traditional practices (purists) and those who are willing to experiment and adapt traditional practices to suit contemporary demands (pragmatists) is considered a common issue among traditional musicians. For instance, Catherine Grant (2012, 37) in her research on Vietnamese *ca trù*⁹³ has observed this tension. The purists reject the attempts made by some musicians to incorporate foreign elements into traditional *ca trù*. The purists believe that the foreign elements will potentially affect the artistic quality of *ca trù*.

⁹² The Regent of Rote-Ndao Regency

⁹³ Chamber song of northern Vietnam, accompanied by trapezoidal lute and drum (Nguyễn 2008, 484)

In order to give a clear picture of what happens in Rote-Ndao Regency, primarily in relation to the sustainability of *meko* playing, the focus after this introduction is on: 1) Aims and Limitations; 2) Sustainability, Intangible Cultural Heritage and Transmission; 3) Domains that Affect the Sustainability of *Meko* and *Sasandu* Playing, which is split into five subsections: a) Systems of Learning Music; b) Musicians and Communities; c) Contexts and Constructs; d) Infrastructure and Regulations; and e) Media and the Music Industry; and 4) Summary.

8.2. Aims and Limitations

This chapter aims to analyze factors that influence the sustainability of traditional music, in particular, *meko* music and playing in Rote. In analyzing these factors, I adopt Huib Schippers' five domains as a model for cultural analysis: 1) systems of learning music; 2) musicians and communities; 3) contexts and constructs; 4) infrastructure and regulations; and 5) media and the music industry. Schippers' domains fit well with factors that concern my research participants, particularly in relation to *sasandu* and *meko* teaching and learning in Rote; the change of attitude among the Rotenese toward the significance of *sasandu* and *meko* playing; government support for *sasandu* and *meko* teaching and learning; and the emergence of the *SKB*. For example, in regard to the support of the government, Dami (2015) has blamed the government for doing very little to safeguard it. Dami has also refused a claim of the late Saudale⁹⁴ concerning the role of local government in promoting *meko* playing within the school curriculum. According to Dami (2015), the programs run by local government are not purely the initiative of Rote-Ndao Regency; rather, they are regional programs implemented across the East Nusa Tenggara region. As these programs are supposed to include all traditional arts from across East Nusa Tenggara Province, they have no depth of content. *Meko* playing occupies only a very small portion of the

⁹⁴ The former head of the House of Representatives, Rote-Ndao Regency.

whole course subject, because it has to share with traditional musics and arts from all other areas within East Nusa Tenggara Province.

A limitation of this research is a lack of written information provided by the government of Rote-Ndao Regency regarding *sasandu* and *meko* performers, musical instruments, programs and activities run by schools and music and dance studios across Rote. The limited availability of written documents has directly affected me as a researcher in mapping out the problems faced by Rotenese people, especially in relation to the sustainability of *meko* playing in Rote. Instead of using the official data issued by the government of Rote-Ndao Regency as supporting evidence, I collected the information concerning the sustainability of *meko* playing in Rote from my research participants, as well as informed by my ethnographic observation.

8.3. Sustainability, Intangible Cultural Heritage and Transmission

In this section, I will discuss briefly some keywords that will be used throughout this chapter (i.e., sustainability, intangible cultural heritage and transmission). I chose the word “sustainability” instead of “preservation” because the former acknowledges the viability of traditional music to endure and to evolve (cf. Grant 2014, 12), while the latter implies that traditional music is an isolated, stable, impenetrable and uninfluenced artifact (cf. Titon 2009b, 30; Stubington 1987, 3).

Long before the word “sustainability” was effectively used in applied ethnomusicology in the late 1980s, US ethnomusicologists, such as Alan Lomax have applied it in their work, primarily to sustain musicians, musical traditions and music cultures (Titon 2015, 172). Alan Lomax (1915-2002) was an American ethnomusicologist and the advocate of the well-known Appalachian singer, Jean Ritchie. Lomax recorded Ritchie’s singing in 1949 -1950 and helped to launch Ritchie’s career as a tradition-bearer of Appalachian singing (Titon 2015, 172).

The second generation of US ethnomusicologists led by Paul Berliner, Steven Feld and Anthony Seeger followed the footsteps of Lomax. Berliner's (1993) research focused on the Shona traditional musical instrument, the *mbira*, and Shona musicians. Berliner was concerned about his subject position in relation to his participants (Tito 2015, 176). Feld and Seeger conducted research among tropical rain forest people. Feld (1990) studied the Kaluli people of Papua New Guinea, and Seeger (1987) researched the Suyá of South America. They both helped their research participants maintain their musical traditions and cultures in the face of modernization (Tito 2015, 176).

Recently, music sustainability as a research topic has received much attention internationally, particularly in Australia (e.g., Marett and Barwick 2003; Marett et al. 2005; and Treloyn 2007). For instance, the Garma Statement on Indigenous Music and Performance (in Marett and Barwick 2003, 144) acknowledges the significance of songs, dances and ceremonies as an important key to sustaining the indigenous cultures of Australia. This has provided a solid foundation for Australian research on sustainability.

A shift from music "preservation" to "sustainability" dates back to the late nineteenth century. In an article published in the journal *Musicology Australia*, Jill Stubington (1987) pointed out the long-lasting interest of ethnomusicological scholarship in endangered music genres. The works of earlier "ethnomusicologists," for instance, Frances Densmore (1867-1957) focused on the documentation of Native American cultures and dying musical traditions. Dying musics were collected via modest recording tools, and the recorded sounds were transcribed into notation. Recent approaches to musics in danger of dying are more pragmatic than the earlier ones, and natural process, change and decline are acknowledged (Grant 2011, 95).

The issue of music sustainability has become a concern of ethnomusicologists because it relates to the principles of social responsibility. It extends the academic goal of broadening and deepening knowledge and understanding of problem solving beyond the academic context (Harrison, Mackinlay, and Pettan 2010, 1). Applied ethnomusicology is perceived as a scholarly response to cultural and social needs that contribute musical applications to communities (Harrison, Mackinlay, and Pettan 2010, 16). Applied ethnomusicologists agree that musical tradition should change according to present circumstances and the results should be transmitted to future generations (Aubert 2007, 10).

To some degree, we can find the idea of continuity in the Rotenese dyadic system (for more information in Rotenese dyadic system, see Chapter 6 *The Oral History of Rotenese Musical Instruments*). According to the Rotenese concept of dualism, the number nine (*sio*) represents perfection and continuity. Continuity is embodied through the entire number of tuned wooden/bamboo bars in a set of *meko ai* (wooden trough xylophone) or metal gongs in a set of *meko besik/lilok/bronze* (iron/brass/bronze hanging bossed-gongs or iron/brass/bronze central-raised knobs metallophone). Therefore, nine as the representation of man-made perfection and continuity becomes a plausible answer regarding differing opinions over the number of gongs in a *meko lalangak esa* (see 5.3.3.2. *Terminology and Morphology of the Meko*).

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is another important key phrase that needs definition. In its second article of the 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, UNESCO defines the ICH as follows:

The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith—that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage (UNESCO 2003, Article 2.1).

According to this definition, ICH can be understood as all forms of cultural heritage that lack physical manifestation (Stefano, Davis, and Corsane 2014, 1). Music, along with drama and dance, are categorized as intangible cultural heritage because they are an expression of humankind; they contribute to the diversity of the Earth; they are part of intangible cultural expressions; they are associated with collective identity; and they strengthen social adherence (Grant 2014, 7-9).

Richard Kurin (2004, 69) identifies one problem of this definition, namely, that not all human cultural activity is categorized as ICH. For instance, video games, pop music and McDonald's recipes are ruled out of the Convention's list. UNESCO only seeks for: 1) meaningful traditions and not merely utilitarian; 2) traditions as something that is communally shared within, symbolically identified with a cultural community, and socially transmitted through generations. Following the definition given by the *2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* is perplexing. Kurin (2004, 71) criticizes the Convention by noting that has become a matter of professional judgment more than a legal stricture.

Disregarding the judgmental problems of the Convention's definition of the ICH by Kurin (2004), it will be still used in this research. Following this definition, *sasandu* and *meko* playing are categorized throughout this chapter as intangible cultural heritage. *Sasandu* and *meko* playing are musical practices, expressions, representations, knowledge and skills, which are claimed by the Rotenese people as part of their cultural heritage.

Finally, the word transmission refers to "the means by which musical compositions, performing practices and knowledge are passed from musician to musician" (Rice 2001, 696). Musical transmission has four dimensions, namely: 1) the technical dimension, which concerns

the distinction between oral and written traditions; 2) the social dimension, which concerns the performers and the audience; 3) the cognitive dimension, which concerns with the process of learning music; and 4) the institutional dimension, which concerns the organization of music transmission (Rice 2001, 296-298). In the context of Rotenese gong music and playing, the discussion will focus only on the technical and institutional dimensions because they were very evident during my fieldwork. For instance, how have *meko* music and playing as an oral tradition has been transmitted from generation to generation? And how have *meko* teaching and learning been formally and informally organized through institutions (e.g., schools and music and dance studios)?

8.4. Domains that Affect the Sustainability of *Meko* and *Sasandu* Playing

In his five domains, Schippers (2010) covers such topics as how traditional music has been transmitted through generations, how the change in the number of performers engaged will affect the whole music playing, what the community has done to sustain their traditional music, what happens if the number of highly competent performers decline, and how government policies will affect the sustainability of this tradition (see 8.2. *Aims and Limitations*). As previously mentioned, the application of Schippers' domains fits well with problems that concern my research participants in Rote. For example, in discussing musical transmission, Schippers acknowledges both intra- and inter-generational musical transmission, which is relevant to the Rotenese context.

8.4.1. Systems of Teaching and Learning Music

Teaching and learning are one the most determining factors in the sustainability of music, in particular traditional music. The Revival of Afghan Music (ROAM), which is a project carried out by the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (2014), and a project initiated by Cambodian

Living Arts to preserve the Cambodia's artistic heritage (2015), are just two examples of the utilization of teaching and learning systems in aiming to sustain the future of endangered traditional music. Therefore, it is argued that establishing an effective system of teaching and learning will guarantee the future of *sasandu* and *meko* playing.

Introducing *sasandu* and *meko* playing to primary and secondary students is considered the best practice in sustaining the future of these two Rotenese traditional musical instruments. This practice is in accordance with the policy of UNESCO on arts transmission and education (2015), which targets school-age children. This practice has been adopted by countries such as South Korea and Finland. South Korea has introduced *p'ansori* (Korean "epic storytelling through song") to the younger audience (Um 2008), while Finland has involved school-age children in designing and carving their own five-string *kanteles*, and introduced them to the Finnish folksong tradition (*kalevala*) (Ruokonen et al. 2014).

The Kantele project is an exemplar of how central governments can introduce effectively intangible cultural heritage (i.e., *Kantele* and *Kalevala*) to students of young age. Students build within themselves an awareness about their common sustainable future, and by designing and constructing their own *Kanteles* Finnish students study consumer behavior, choices and actions in regard to sustainability (Ruokonen et al. 2014, 76).

In the following subsections, I will discuss the three observed methods of Rotenese *meko* learning and teaching (i.e., listening, memorizing and imitating; holding hands; and notation) through two different teaching and learning contexts, namely, informal and non-formal. The formal teaching and learning context⁹⁵ is not discussed because it is not applicable in the Rotenese setting.

⁹⁵ The highly institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured "education system," spanning lower primary school and the upper reaches of the university (Coombs and Ahmed 1974, 8).

P.H. Coombs and M. Ahmed (1974, 8) define informal education as “the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment – at home, at work, at play; from the example and attitudes of family and friends; from travel, reading newspapers and books; or by listening to the radio or viewing films or television.” Non-formal education is defined as “any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children” (Coombs and Ahmed 1974, 8).

According to A. Rogers (2004), Coombs and Ahmed’s definition of non-formal education is imprecise because, in fact, this term is interpreted differently by different countries. For some countries it can be an educational program run by the Ministry of Education apart from the schools and colleges; for others, it can be educational and training activities initiated by other ministries or educational programs organized by non-governmental organizations. The Indonesian National Education System (Indonesia 2003) defines non-formal education as any structural, hierarchical, educational programs carried out outside the formal system (e.g., language, cooking and driving classes run either by the government or private business).

Unlike Coombs and Ahmed, who perceive formal, non-formal and informal education as the place where teaching and learning processes takes place, Thomas J. La Belle (1982, 162) argues that formal, non-formal and informal education should be perceived as teaching and learning styles rather than discrete entities. This means that these three styles of teaching and learning are applicable in schools as well as outside schools regardless of their places.

Formal, non-formal and informal education can be understood as: 1) teaching and learning context (e.g., schools and outside schools); 2) teaching and learning style (the nature of teaching

and learning process); 3) ownership (who makes the decisions); and 4) intentionality (mind is directed toward direction) (Campbell et al. 2005, 26). Coombs and Ahmed, and La Belle only discuss two aspect of formal, non-formal and informal education systems. For this chapter, I will use these two teaching and learning contexts in the discussion of *meko* transmission because they are very evident in my research.

8.4.1.1. Informal Music Learning Context

Based on my research observation, there has been no methodical way of teaching *meko* to beginners. *Meko* playing techniques have been passed down from generation to generation primarily through listening, memorizing and imitating. In general, the listening, memorizing and imitating method is a common practice among traditional musicians due to the non-existence of music notation during learning and performance. There are at least two noticeable differences between traditional *meko* teaching and learning in Rote and other traditional music training: 1) the role of music instructor; and 2) opportunities to practice the music that has been heard.

Unlike the dominant role of the music instructor in Javanese and Balinese *gamelan* teaching (cf. Tenzer 1991; Lindsay 1992; Prickett 2007; Grimmer 2011; Kashalkar-Karve 2013), the role of the *meko* instructor in an informal setting is minimal or nearly absent. However, their role becomes significant in a non-formal teaching and learning context. For instance, the teaching and learning of *sasandu* and *meko* playing as an extracurricular activity in primary and secondary schools, as well as in music and dance studios.

In regards to the chance to practice the music, Rotenese children in the past would not be allowed by adults to touch and strike the *meko*. Adults would rather encourage children to attend ceremonies and watch performances (Nalle 2015a). Whenever the children were attempting to touch or strike the instruments, the adults would usually discipline them and keep them away

from the instruments. Intimidating words like: “Don’t touch the instruments because they have been tuned well,” or “If you touch the instrument, you may break it” (Tuy 2015) are common occurrences often repeated by the adults. Parents believe that their children ought to find their own way of learning the *meko*⁹⁶ because they (the parents) also learned the same way when they were children. In contrast, *gamelan* rehearsals in Bali are open to people of any age to participate and children are encouraged to attend. After the rehearsal, children are allowed to practice the sounds they heard during the rehearsal (Tenzer 1991, 107).

Grappling with this situation, some keen children would find ways to learn *meko* playing. First, some would listen attentively to a certain sound produced by one or a pair of gongs, memorize and practice it later at home using *lontar* fruit (*sai boak*) as a gong substitute. Second, some determined children would seek out a chance for *meko* practice, usually during the lunch or dinner break when all the performers left their instruments unattended. Finally, some courageous children like Nalle and his friends would “intimidate” their parents.

Nalle’s (2015a) chance to learn *meko* playing came unexpectedly. Like many other Rotenese children, during a ceremony that Nalle and his childhood friends attended in his village, they tried to strike the *meko* during the musicians’ break. Some adults in the ceremony forbade them to touch and play the instruments. The enraged Nalle then invited his friends to leave the ceremonial venue, saying, “When our parents die, let them be buried with these gongs.” Shocked by Nalle’s intimidation, later his parents allowed him and his friends to learn *meko* playing.

Another Rotenese traditional musician, Pellando’u received the chance to study *meko* playing for the first time when he was in Kupang (the capital city of West Timor) and joined the

⁹⁶ I assume that this is the most common way of teaching and learning *meko*, *sasandu* and *tambur* on the island.

Eka Ria Music and Dance Studio run by Adriel Fandu. His memories of *meko* playing as a child were rekindled when he joined this studio (Pellando'u 2015).

The “listen, memorize and practice” learning method was also adopted in the dissemination of *meko* music from one place to another. One or several musicians who were paying a visit to a different region would normally pay attention to any musical events that took place. When they found any music that might be interesting for them to listen to and play, they would listen closely to the sound, record it quickly in their memories, and imitate the sound when they returned to their homes. However, this method has its weaknesses because the human brain has limited capacity to hold information for several days or weeks. It is plausible that in teaching the memorized *li* to others, there might be minor or even major mistakes. This helps explain why one *li* might have many variations (cf. Keeler 2008, 219). For example, according to Nalle (2015a), the most authentic piece of music, called *Li Tai Benu*, can only be found in the place where it originated: *nusak* Oenale. *Li Tai Benu* from other *nusak* differs from that of *nusak* Oenale because of this process. Therik (2015) supports Nalle by saying, “The sound of *Li Tai Benu* in the West (i.e., Thie) is better from the East.” Therik differs from Nalle because he associates *Li Tai Benu* with *nusak* Thie, whereas Nalle associates *Li Tai Benu* with *nusak* Oenale.

Realizing the limitations of the humans to store and remember music, Faah, a Rotenese traditional musician, has stored some of gong music recordings on his cellphone. He can play these recordings any time, primarily when he forgets. During a session of *meko* recording I conducted in the subdistrict of Pantai Baru on April 28, 2015, I saw how Faah played his cellphone to recall the sound of *Li Nitu* (*the Music of Satan*) that he had forgotten.

In modern Rotenese society, the “listen, memorize and imitate” method is problematic. On the one hand, this method has been accepted as the most common way of teaching and learning

meko for years; on the other hand, it has been deemed by Sandro David Sina (2015) from the subdistrict of Ndao-Nuse to be the primary cause behind a decline of interest among the younger generation. According to Sina (2015), nowadays, parents cannot expect their children to learn *meko* by themselves, as their parents did many years ago. Living in the modern day, children have more options to choose than their parents had (e.g., listening to pop music on radio or cellphone, or watching pop music performance and movies on television or on YouTube). Sina (2015) expressed concern about the future of *meko* playing in Rote-Ndao Regency if this traditional way of teaching and learning the *meko* is preserved. In other words, *meko* playing will only be sustained if the teaching and learning method is changed.

8.4.1.2. Non-formal Teaching and Learning Context

Unlike the “listen, memorize and practice” learning method, which is self-learning, in the “holding hands” learning method, the role of an instructor is dominant. A learner will depend fully on the instructor’s instruction and guidance. This method has become quite popular, particularly in schools and music studios. In contrast to the process of teaching and learning in the Balinese *gamelan* where the instructor will play a very short musical passage first and the students listen to and watch the directions of his/her mallets and then imitate what has been demonstrated by their instructor (Tenzer 1991, 105), the teaching and learning system in Rote is distinctive. First, the instructor will grasp and move the learner’s right wrist in accordance with the rhythmic pattern he/she plays. Second, the instructor will ask the learner to repeat the rhythmic pattern by him/herself. Sometimes, the same process is repeated several times until the learner feels comfortable with what he/she does.

The “holding hands” method is only suitable for the teaching of the *meko* and not for the *sasandu*. The construction of the *sasandu*—the tubular structure surrounded by a *haik*

(hemispherical resonator made of *lontar* leaves), and narrowed spaces between strings—blocks the learner’s sight and does not allow the learner to observe the instructor’s demonstration clearly.

The third method of teaching and learning *meko* is the use of cipher notation, which is very common throughout Indonesia. To my understanding, Esau Nalle, a *sasandu* and *meko* performer from Oenitas Village, is the only *meko* instructor in Rote who employs cipher notation in his *meko* teaching. Nalle’s numbered notation is very simple because it only displays the notes without rhythms and beams (see figure 8.1.).



Figure 8.1. The example of Nalle’s numbered notation

In his cipher notation shorter notes are written close to one another, whereas longer notes are written with more space, for example: 112121 3 66 5 3 .

Although the “notation” developed by Nalle is very simple, it works quite effectively in the teaching of the *meko*, particularly for beginners who do not read music notation well. The number and the grouping of notes basically helps the learner to remember which gong has to be played and how many times it should be struck. Nalle employs this method for teaching the *meko* to beginners. Two weaknesses of this method are: 1) it does not specifically show the rhythms; and 2) it is not applicable to the *sasandu*⁹⁷ because of the difficulty of reading multiple melodic lines at once.

⁹⁷ Playing the *sasandu* is considered more difficult than playing *meko* because the *sasandu* is the reduction of the *meko* ensemble. This modest notation is unable to represent the complexities of *sasandu* playing fully.

In the teaching of the *sasandu* and the *meko* in the primary and the secondary schools, I observed there are at least two basic problems: 1) the unavailability of accomplished *meko* instructors across Rote (excluding the educational backgrounds of the instructors)⁹⁸ (Malelak 2015b); and 2) the limited government funding available to support the *meko* playing program in schools (Forah 2015). Grant (2014, 2-3) identifies another potential problem regarding such learning, although in a different context, that might threaten the viability of traditional music, namely the changes of teaching and learning methods when traditional music begins to be taught at schools, but it is not the case in *meko* teaching and learning in Rote.

A lack of availability of accomplished *sasandu* and *meko* instructors across Rote has affected the teaching of the *sasandu* and the *meko*. For instance, in a place like Bokai, *meko* playing is not included in the school curriculum because the tradition of *meko* playing has been lost since around 2007/2008 (Malelak 2015c). In contrast, in the subdistricts of Northwest Rote and Southwest Rote where accomplished *meko* performers are plentiful, the teaching of the *meko* in schools has never been an issue.

In regard to budget constraints or minimum sources of funding, some schools (e.g., Eahun Primary School in the subdistrict of East Rote) have been limited from holding rehearsals on a regular basis because it becomes “mandatory” for the schools to serve the *meko* instructors, who usually are not school teachers, with gifts such as a pack of cigarettes, a bottle of *sopi* (local-made alcohol),⁹⁹ a box of betel leaves, areca nuts, lime and tobacco, and some money for transportation.

⁹⁸ In general, most *meko* instructors are farmers, and only few of them are teachers, for instance, Esau Nalle (a teacher at Oenitas Primary School in West Rote), Susana Lusi-Nggebu (a teacher at Batutua Primary School in Southwest Rote), Hesron Malelak (a teacher at Lobalain Intermediate School in Lobalain), and Nehemia Faah (a retired teacher living in Olafuliha’a Urban Village, the subdistrict of Pantai Baru).

⁹⁹ The function of *sopi* is to boost up the spirit of the *meko* performers (Thonak 2016).

In an interview with Haning¹⁰⁰ (2015a) and Feoh¹⁰¹ (2015), they both were surprised and questioned why some schools did not use *Bantuan Operasional Sekolah* (the School Operational Assistance). But as I searched for more information about this funding, I found that the *Bantuan Operasional Sekolah* (BOS) fund is allocated primarily for operating expenses such as a monthly salary for the teachers and the procurement of office supplies and school maintenance (SekolahDasar.Net 2018).

In response to this condition, some schools as well as some studios only practice when there is an event to prepare for. In the school context, this strategy only works well if the *meko* performers are adults (e.g., the *meko* ensemble from Eahun Primary School). In two performances I witnessed (i.e., the welcoming ceremony of the Deputy Regent of Rote-Ndao in Londalusi Urban Village, East Rote; and the 2015 Rote-Ndao Annual Arts Festival), the dancers of the East Rote delegation were primary and secondary school students, whereas the *meko* performers were adults. A potential problem caused by this practice is that the students of this school will never have a chance to learn *meko* playing.

Schools, along with music and dance studios, are believed to be the best places for exposing *meko* and *sasandu* to the young beginners. As Olcay Muslu Gardner (2015, 76) argues, youth are potential safeguarders, promoters and sustainers of intangible cultural heritage as long as they are aware of it. Thailand is a good example of how Thai classical music, which was about to be lost in the late of 1930s, could be revitalized. Utilizing universities and other educational institutions to educate and train Thai traditional musicians has succeeded in making a remarkable comeback of Thai classical music (Miller 2008, 135). Another example is *gamelan* playing in

¹⁰⁰ The Regent of Rote-Ndao Regency.

¹⁰¹ The former head of the Office of Tourism and Culture of Rote-Ndao Regency.

Bali. The Balinese do not fear the future of their *gamelan* playing because children have been exposed to this tradition since childhood.

8.4.2. Musicians and Communities

Musicians are the key factors in the sustainability of *meko* and *sasandu* playing in Rote. The other element is the audience or community. Musicians need an audience in order to watch and to appreciate their music. In regard to the relatedness of musicians and their audience, there is an old saying in Rotenese, “*Manapela malole, ela manamanitu and mana li’u meko malole, ela manamanitu*” (“Good dancers and *meko* performers require a good audience”) (Nauk 2015).

To give a brief detail of *meko* playing in Rote, I will discuss some related aspects, such as: 1) the geographical distribution of *meko* playing across Rote; and 2) some efforts that have been done by the Rotenese as a community¹⁰² to sustain *meko* playing.

In an interview with Feoh (2015), he asserted that there has been a significant decline in *meko* playing. Since the establishment of the Regency of Rote Ndao in 2003, Feoh (2015) asserts that the tradition of *meko* playing has dropped by more than fifty percent. Subdistricts such as East Rote, Northwest Rote and Southwest Rote are still considered as the centers of *meko* playing. Feoh breaks this down as follows:

1. Ninety percent of *meko* performers live in the districts of East Rote, Northwest Rote and Southwest Rote.
2. Another ten percent of *meko* performers live in the other subdistricts: Ndao Nuse, West Rote, Lobalain, Central Rote, South Rote, and Landu *Leko* (Feoh 2015).

¹⁰² A real community.

It is quite difficult to judge whether Feoh's assertion is accurate or not since no evidence is available.¹⁰³ Feoh might be correct because formerly he was the head of the Rote-Ndao Office of Tourism and Culture. Another factor that supports Feoh's assertion is my personal observation during my fieldwork in Rote. I observed that *meko* playing was quite vibrant in the districts of East Rote, Northwest Rote and Southwest Rote, whereas in a location like Bokai the tradition of *meko* playing is non-existent.

The emergence of music and dance studios in Rote in the last two decades is part of local communities' initiatives to revitalize *sasandu* and *meko* playing in Rote. Roughly, there are around one hundred music and dance studios across the Regency of Rote Ndao (Feoh 2015). According to the written document authored by the Office of Culture and Tourism of the Rote-Ndao Regency (2014a), seventy two music and dance studios (including those managed by villages, schools and individuals) are officially registered across Rote. The number could be higher if the unregistered studios are included.

Like schools, it is not an easy task for a manager to run his/her music and dance studio, because he/she has to provide a place including a *meko lalanggak esa* for rehearsals as well as food, drink and (sometimes) transport money for the musicians. For all of these expenses, the manager normally has to take some money from their own pocket. Some music and dance studio managers (e.g., Gabriel Dami, Fransina Pah, Yusuf Messah, Edward Pellando'u and Paulus Henukh) established their studios purely because of their passion and love for Rotenese culture. As I observed during my research, the tradition of serving food, drink and money for transportation only took place in studios where its members are adults (e.g., *Penapua* Studio

¹⁰³ During my research in Rote, the Office of Tourism and Culture, Rote-Ndao Regency had not started building a database concerning the number of living competent performers of the *sasandu* and the *meko*, *sasandu* and *meko* sets, and music and dance studios.

owned by Dami), whereas in studios with young age members (e.g., *Nusa Tua Meni* Studio owned by Pah and *Sasando Permai* owned by Lily Lenes) there was no food served by the manager.

Some studios such as *Nusa Tua Meni*, *Sasando Permai* and *Penapua* in the subdistrict of Lobalain; *Taisamuk* in the subdistrict of South Rote; *Deta Hitu*, *Ndolu Inggü*, *Batu Lei* and *Samusio* in the subdistrict of Southwest Rote; and *Deta Manu* in the subdistrict of West Rote are currently active on a fulltime basis. These studios are managed and owned mostly by teachers from local elementary and intermediate schools who are also *meko* instructors,¹⁰⁴ and most of their members are their students. They practice regularly twice in a week, from four to six in the afternoon. On the other hand, most of the inactive studios are managed and owned by people whose jobs are other than teaching, and their members primarily are farmers, shepherds or fishermen.

Another initiative to sustain *meko* playing was made by *Forum Komunikasi Tokoh Adat Peduli Budaya* (the Communication Forum of Indigenous People Concerned about Culture). In order to revitalize *meko* playing across Rote, in the last five years, this forum has suggested each village in the Regency of Rote Ndao include *meko* playing in wedding ceremonies and receptions. According to the head of this Forum, Yohanis B. Ndolu (2015), it is highly possible that in the future this proposal will become mandatory (Ndolu 2015).

A decline in the number of accomplished traditional musicians has become a general concern in many countries dealing with issues around music sustainability. There are several factors that may contribute to this, for instance: 1) political and social factors (Grant 2012); 2)

¹⁰⁴ For instance, *Taisamuk* Music and Dance Studio is owned and managed by Hesron Malelak (a teacher at Lobalain Intermediate School), *Samusio* belongs to Susana Lusi-Nggebu (a teacher at Batutua Elementary School), and *Deta Manu* belongs to Esau Nalle (a teacher at Oenitas Elementary School).

natural disasters (Kartomi 2010); 3) wars (Miller and Williams 2008a; Baily 2016); and 4) Western music influence (Sam 2008; Keeler 2008).

The impact of Western pop music and the enthusiasm of Southeast Asian youths for learning traditional music has been discussed by Sooi Beng Tan (2008). According to Tan (2008, 70), youths in Southeast Asian countries are more interested in listening to popular music than traditional music. There is a perception among Southeast Asians that pop music is associated with modernity, while traditional music is more associated with “inferiority.” Tan (2008, 70) argues that this mentality is a result of a long history of colonialism; colonized people feel that their traditions are inferior to those of their colonizers. The perception of the Khmer people of Cambodia toward their traditional music as useless and a waste of time when the Western music was first introduced to the country (Sam 2008, 119), may support Tan’s argument.

Tan’s argument is also applicable to the context of *meko* learning in Rote. Therik and Sjøen’s concern about the lack of enthusiasm among the youths to learn *meko* playing and the preference of the youths to lean toward Western pop music are in line with Tan’s argument. During my fieldwork, I could feel such perceptions among the younger generation of Rotenese, although this was not clearly expressed.

Learning from his recording project’s travels throughout Indonesia (1990-1999), Philip Yampolsky (2001, 177) argues that such perceptions are a legacy from the administration of Suharto (the second president of Indonesia). In his era, the Indonesian traditional arts did not develop well because they were perceived to be unacceptable to the government and outsiders’ standards and therefore needed improvement. Besides that, the villagers’ way of life was also considered primitive and backward.

Being a traditional musician in Rote, especially a *meko* performer, is not a career option. Being a *meko* performer also does not confer heightened social status. Although *meko* performers play a significant role in Rotenese rituals and ceremonies, people take them for granted. As previously mentioned, *meko* performers usually receive cigarettes, areca nuts, betel leaves, limes, distilled palm juice (*sopi*) and meals from the host for the service they provide. This seems to be another reason for the declining number of accomplished *meko* performers in Rote. A similar situation happens in Cambodia, where many Khmer older traditional musicians give up playing music because the earnings are insufficient to support their families (Sam 2008, 120).

8.4.3. Contexts and Constructs

Concerning the change of musical context in relation to its impact on traditional music, Miller and Williams (2008, 67-69) identify five potential factors: 1) changes in agricultural practices; 2) urbanization; 3) loss of regionality; 4) changes in patronage; and 5) wars. For example, in the past, playing traditional music in Java was associated (among them) with growing rice. Angklung (tuned bamboo rattles) were played by the farmers in the traditional rituals to please *Dewi Sri*, the goddess of rice, so she would bless the villagers with rain. Today, the rituals of *Dewi Sri* have been abandoned because Javanese farmers are more dependent on tractors, fertilizers and pesticides (Miller and Sean 2008, 64-67). Attitudes toward the importance of *meko* playing has had a big impact on the future of this instrument. Although some people¹⁰⁵ still talk about the significance of the *sasandu* and the *meko* to the Rotenese, primarily in relation to Rotenese identity, it has not been performed as frequently as it was.

¹⁰⁵ For instance, Anselmus Haning (2015d), Lens Haning (2015a), Johanis Feoh (2015), Reinert Eduart Therik (2015), Pieter Sjoen (2015), Frans Lau (2015) and Yeri Y. Fanggidae (2015b).

In the past, before radio and television came into Rotenese lives, playing traditional musical instruments like the *sasandu* and the *meko* was an entertainment known by the Rotenese. In those days, the Rotenese would play either the *meko* or the *sasandu*, or dance the *Kebalai*. According to Pieter Sjoen (2015) from Faifua Village in the subdistrict of East Rote, historically, residents - particularly in the territory of East Rote - were required by the King to be able to play the *meko*, dance and read *bini/fini*. Those who could not do those three things well would be fined.¹⁰⁶

During my thirteen-month fieldwork in Rote, I rarely watched *meko* being played and performed in ceremonies, such as funerals and weddings. Surprisingly, another Rotenese pop song titled *Ti'i, Dengka, Lole, Ba'a*—sung by John Seme, a Rotenese artist living in Jakarta—was more frequently played as an accompaniment to the modern *Kebalai* (Rotenese circle dance) of Rote.

Another example of attitude change among the Rotenese comes from a wedding I attended in *nusak Dengka*. A *meko lalanggak esa* that had been set up outside the house remained unplayed until after the ceremony ended. Although some of the *meko* performers had attempted to strike their gongs, they were never given a chance by the host to play even a piece. Instead, the relatives of the married couple, led by the host, performed a western *Polonaise*¹⁰⁷ dance. A modern *Kebalai* of Rote accompanied by the aforementioned Rotenese pop song by John Seme followed.

Apart from Rotenese modern *Kebalai* and *Polonaise*, there is another popular social dance which does not originate from the island, called *Ja'i*. *Ja'i* is a Florinese social dance that has

¹⁰⁶ There is no information available concerning the amount of fines.

¹⁰⁷ This dance was introduced to Indonesia by the Dutch during its colonization (cf. Schmidhofer 2005, 82).

become very popular among the peoples of the East Nusa Tenggara. Due to its popularity among the Rotenese, *Ja'i* dance has been listed as one of several categories in the Annual Cultural Arts Festival held by Rote-Ndao Regency. To attract more people to participate, in 2015 the Rote-Ndao Office of Culture and Tourism gave the first-prize winner of the *Ja'i* dance category three million rupiah or equivalent to NZ\$322 (Bako 2015b).¹⁰⁸

Paulus Henukh (2015a), a Rotenese musician living in Kuanino Urban Village in Kupang, has told me the same situation that exists in Kupang, the capital city of West Timor. According to him, there has been a lack of interest and concern for *meko* playing among the Rotenese diaspora in Kupang. Such a situation has led to the absence of *meko* playing in ritual ceremonies (e.g., at weddings and funerals).

Rotenese attitudes toward the significance of *sasandu* and *meko* playing have been changing over a long time due to various factors. Two key factors that have contributed significantly to this change are: 1) the iconoclastic¹⁰⁹ doctrine of the Pentecostal churches in the 1960s; and 2) cassette technology and the pervasive presence of pop music. Each of these factors will be discussed briefly in the following subsections.

8.4.3.1. The Iconoclastic Doctrine of the Pentecostal Churches from the 1960s

One factor that has contributed toward the major decline in the number of *meko* ensembles in Rote was the influence of charismatic movements in the subdistrict of South Rote in the late 1960s. Historically, King Messakh Mesah Saudale, who was in conflict with the Christian Evangelical Church (Gereja Masehi Injili) in Timor in 1965, decided to invite the Pentecostal

¹⁰⁸ The nominal prize received by the *Ja'i* champion is less than the nominal received by the *meko* champion, but in terms of its preparation, *Ja'i* dancing is less complicated than *meko* performance.

¹⁰⁹ The destruction of images and pictures set up as objects of veneration (OUP 2007).

churches from Termanu to start their ministry in Keka and Talae (Dethan 2015). As they grew in number and popularity, a church denomination known as the Full Gospel Bethel Church (*Gereja Bethel Injil Sepenuh*) issued an edict around 1967 that prohibited its members from exercising their own traditions. Playing *meko* and dancing were considered idolatrous and sinful acts. Because of this edict, many members sold, burned or threw away their gong sets.

The relationship between music and censorship is as old as music itself (Drewett 2017, 43). A conversion of one group of people from their previous belief to Christianity, for instance, the conversion of the Munda people in India's east-central plateau, may cause censorship. For instance, the missionaries forbade the traditional singing, playing and dancing of the Munda people because of their association with pagan rituals (Babiracki 1985, 96). Another example is the Shuar traditional music of Amazonian Ecuador. Many of their songs for the head-shrinking feast have disappeared because they were considered as violating Christian teachings (Belzner 1985, 132). In the case of Rote, a significant decline of the number of *meko lalanggak esa* in Talae and Keka was partly an impact of the edict issued by a religious group known as the Full Gospel Bethel Church. This church denomination found traditional music against the Christian values (cf. Queensland Conservatorium Research Centre 2008, 11).

8.4.3.2. The Pervasive Influence of Pop Music

Another factor that contributed to the decline in *meko* playing in Rote was the pervasive influence of pop music disseminated through cassette technology. The impact of pop music on the decline of Rotenese traditional music began in the early 1980s with the support of cassette technology¹¹⁰ (Fanggidae 2015b). The dissemination of pop music in Rote was pervasive

¹¹⁰ I refer to the audio cassette player (an electronic device designed for playing a magnetic tape recording format).

because the technology used to play the medium (i.e., compact cassette or cassette tape) was quite affordable for many. Compared to its predecessors (e.g., vinyl record format and phonographs), cassette tapes and audio cassette players are cheaper, more durable and more portable (Manuel 1993, 28). The audio cassette players were so popular among the Rotenese because they could be played for hours without any problems, whereas the *meko* performers could normally play nonstop for one to two hours. Besides that, with the support of a sound system, the sound of an audio cassette player can be amplified to a desired volume level.

Fanggidae (2015b) told me that some Rotenese people prefer to spend five hundred thousand rupiah (equivalent to NZ\$55) or more to rent a sound system, rather than spend less money to hire a group of *meko* performers.¹¹¹ The powerful sound produced from this system creates an exuberant atmosphere, which is preferred by the Rotenese. For the Rotenese, big or loud sound refers to: 1) openness and straightforwardness (Saudale 2015); 2) spirited atmosphere (Fanggidae 2015b); and 3) an invitation (Loloin 2015).

Nowadays, the influence of pop music is ubiquitous compared to the 1980s. Pop music is omnipresent. It is on televisions, mobile phones, public transportation, in stores, mechanics' workshops, restaurants and hospitals. In contrast to the massive recordings of pop music which are available everywhere, the recordings (if available) of *sasandu* and *meko* music are rarely played in public spaces.¹¹² What happens in Rote contrasts with, for example, the proliferation of cassette audio in Java in the 1990s, which sharpened awareness of Javanese traditions (e.g.,

¹¹¹ To invite some *meko* performers to perform music, a host is only required to serve the performers with betel leaves, areca nut, lime, tobacco, several packs of cigarettes, *sopi* (distilled *lontar* wine) and meals.

¹¹² There is no clear explanation about this, but it seems more about financial profit than socio-cultural responsibility.

gamelan music) (Manuel 1993, 32). There are two possible reasons for this: 1) there is no music producer in Rote; and 2) the market is small and dispersed.

The pervasive influence of pop music is quite obvious in Rote. Based on my observation of two large ceremonies that I attended during my fieldwork in Rote, both hosts preferred to perform/play Indonesian pop music rather than Rotenese traditional music. The first host hired an *organ tunggal* (a professional synthesizer performer) to entertain the audience. The accompanist, together with one or two solo vocalists, performed some Indonesian pop songs. The second host played Indonesian pop music recordings from an audio player, which was amplified using several big speakers.

The birth of a *SKB* in Rote should be understood as a demand for change in contemporary context. A resistance to change and a tendency to think of traditional music as unchanged, isolated, stable, impenetrable and uninfluenced cultural heritage denies the basic nature of music culture because it is dynamic and ever changing (Berreman in Jairazbhoy 1977a). Michael Walsh (2005, 303) argues that it is an absurdity to think of “music” as unchanging; likewise, Janet Mills (2005, 154) says it would be inaccurate to view any music as a museum piece, because no music is unchanging.

8.4.4. Infrastructure and Regulations

Infrastructure refers to the basic facilities (i.e., the physical structure or “hardware”) required in order for an activity, program or performance to run properly. The availability of *meko* makers and places/events to practice and perform the music is essential to the sustainability of Rotenese music.

In addition to infrastructure, regulations are needed to ensure the sustainability of *meko* playing in Rote. For instance, an obligation for all primary and secondary schools in Rote to

include the teaching and learning of the *sasandu* and the *meko* in non-formal setting; the procurement of *meko* sets and their accessories; and the holding of several annual music and dance workshops need to be put into place.

This section will discuss four related factors: 1) *meko* manufacturers in Rote; 2) the Rote-Ndao Annual Arts Festival; 3) the procurement of *meko lalanggak esa* (a set of *meko*), costumes and *ti'ilangga* (Rotenese traditional hats) for dance and music studios on the island; and 4) the holding of annual music and dance workshops for studio managers.

8.4.4.1. *Meko* Manufacturers

Ledoh from Busalangga Urban Village, Northwest Rote, is currently the only *meko* maker in Rote. His knowledge and skills in *meko* making were acquired from his father, Jeremias Ledoh, and his siblings, Elias and Ayub Ledoh. At first, Young Ledoh was not interested in becoming a *meko* maker, but he changed his mind soon in the early 2000s when his previous business collapsed. With support from Yosia Adrianus Lau, a Rote-Ndao congressman, Ledoh started his *meko*-making enterprise in 2002.

Ledoh's gong products have been criticized for their poor quality, in particular: 1) the use of thin iron plates; and 2) the welding of the rim of the gong¹¹³ rather than the folding (*titi*) (Dami 2015; Feoh 2015; and Ledoh 2015a). Despite such criticisms, these gongs have been widely used in Rote, particularly in schools as well as music and dance studios, because the prices are affordable.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ In response to the second criticism, Ledoh (Ledoh 2015c) has recently changed his *meko* making technique from welding to folding.

¹¹⁴ For instance, in the 2000s, a set of his *meko* would be sold for one million rupiahs (equal to NZ\$ 100), whereas the same instruments made in Bali would cost five million rupiahs (equal to NZ\$ 515). In 2015, during my fieldwork in Rote, Ledoh sold a set of his gongs for between five and ten million rupiahs (equal to NZ\$ 515 to 1,030).

Becoming the only *meko* maker in Rote has not guaranteed him success. Ledoh (2015c) has only sold about sixty *meko* sets over the span of fourteen years working in the business. On average, he has sold four to five sets of *meko* per year. Realizing that, by becoming a *meko* maker he was not able to make a living and financially support his family, Ledoh decided to have two extra jobs (i.e., as a mechanic and a rice husk cleaner¹¹⁵).

Ledoh (2015c) has complained about a lack of support from the local government. A proposal seeking government funding, sent to the Office of Trade and Industry on March 16, 2014, has not received any response yet. He suspects that his different political affiliation¹¹⁶ might become the primary cause for this.¹¹⁷ In his proposal, Ledoh is seeking government funding for the procurement of a lathe machine and metal plates. A lathe is required by Ledoh to improve the quality of his *meko* manufacturing.

8.4.4.2. The Rote-Ndao Annual Arts Festival

The next related factor that will be discussed in the next subsection is the annual arts festival held by the regent of Rote-Ndao. To revitalize *meko* and *sasandu* playing, since 2003, the Office of Education and Culture of the Regency of Rote Ndao has regularly organized an annual Rote-Ndao Regional Arts Festival.¹¹⁸ This Arts Festival usually is held during the beginning of July or in the middle of August to coincide with the anniversary of Rote Ndao (July

¹¹⁵ To find his customers, the husk cleaner will wander around the island using a specially modified vehicle equipped with a husk cleaning machine.

¹¹⁶ Ledoh's political party differs from that of the ruling Regent.

¹¹⁷ Crony capitalism—a system in which those close to the political authorities who make and enforce policies receive favors that have large economic value (Haber 2013, xii)—is a common practice among Asian countries, including Indonesia. Articles by Rajeswary Ampalavanar Brown (2006) and Richard Robison (2006) explain how crony capitalism is practiced in Indonesia.

¹¹⁸ Such a top-down initiative dominates many countries in East Asia (Howard 2016).

2) or Indonesian Independence Day (August 17). This festival aims to foster love for Rotenese traditional arts, particularly among elementary, intermediate and high school students. For that reason, the government gives an emphasis more on participation than merit.¹¹⁹ The festival is divided into several competition categories: 1) The *sasandu*; 2) The gong; and 3) Music and Dance (traditional and new creations). Participants are categorized by age group: Elementary School (7-12/13 years old), Intermediate School (13/14-15/16) years old), Senior High School (16/17-18/19 years old) and adults/parents. To motivate village artists, the government provides funding to cover the rehearsal costs including an honorarium for the instructors, transportation and refreshments (Feoh 2015). In addition to this government funding, the government also provided prize money for the winners of each category. Some money as an incentive also was given to any group that did an extra performance at the event other than the competition itself (Bako 2015b).

Although the holding of the 2015 Rote-Ndao Regional Arts Festival was considered successful,¹²⁰ it has been criticized for: 1) several delays; 2) the lack of transparency around the delegation selection process; and 3) the selection of the adjudicators. In addition to this criticism, some unprofessional management problems have been identified: 1) no fixed dates have been set for this yearly event; 2) the selection of the arts festival's participants was not transparent; and 3) adjudicators have been accused of bias. These three problems will be discussed below in detail.

The event was originally planned to take place in late June 2015 to coincide with the anniversary of the Rote-Ndao Regency, but this was postponed until mid-August 2015 and

¹¹⁹ Each subdistrict has always sent their best delegation to the festival because they aim to win the championship.

¹²⁰ Nine subdistricts participated in the 2015 arts festival, which was a record number of participants. In previous years, on average six participant groups participated in the festival.

replaced by *Li Kakamusu*, *Foti*, *Kebalai* and regional solos, which are part of the calendar of activities for the *PKK* (a village level program to educate women on various aspects of family welfare). In mid-August 2015, this festival was then displaced by the National Youth Level Traditional Competition. In September it was cancelled again because it conflicted with the Tourism Jamboree in West Sumba and the Synod Assembly of the Evangelical Christian Church in Timor in Ba'a, Rote-Ndao Regency. After several delays, the event finally took place near the end of October 2015.

Initially, some participants expressed their frustration over the delays and reconsidered their participation in the festival, although eventually they all participated. There are some reasons why most subdistricts in Rote sent their delegations: 1) the availability of funding provided by the Rote-Ndao Government to cover the expenses for rehearsals, transportation and refreshments; 2) the availability of appealing prize money for the winners of each category; and 3) the availability of some incentive money for any extra performance on the stage by any participating group.

Some participants questioned the transparency of the delegation selection process. The delegations selected from each subdistrict were those who had an established connection with the local government. Each subdistrict, who participated in this competition, wanted to come home with an achievement rather than mere participation. Any win that each subdistrict achieved from this competition would raise the subdistrict's profile.

One research participant¹²¹ noted a wish that, in the next festival, the government will have concern to the independence and impartiality of appointed adjudicators. According to this participant, the 2015 Arts Festival clearly showed that there was a bias in judging, particularly in

¹²¹ In order to maintain the privacy of my participant, his/her name remains anonymous.

the following categories: *Kreasi Tradisi* (Traditional Creation) for Intermediate Schools and *Garapan Baru* (New Creation) for Secondary Schools.

With regards to festivals, my research focuses on three key areas: 1) event management (e.g., Frisby and Getz 1989; Stokes 1994); 2) economics (e.g., Tyrrell and Johnston 2001; Gibson and Davidson 2004); and 3) tourism (e.g., Hall 1992). The Rote-Ndao Annual Arts Festival is an event managed by the Rote-Ndao government (a top-down model of management).¹²² This is very similar to what Frisby and Getz (1988) discussed on community-run festivals. The Rote-Ndao Annual Arts Festival can be deemed as an enjoyable community-based event rather than a money-making tourist attraction. The only difference is that Frisby and Getz's is a bottom-top festival, while the Rote-Ndao Annual Arts Festival is one hundred percent run by the local government (i.e., the Rote-Ndao Regency).

In regards to festivals as events to generate income and attract tourists, the Rote-Ndao Regency has done very little. Although the idea of creating a festival as a means to bring economic benefit to local artists, local community and the government seems inspiring, in practice it did not succeed. While the potential of running a festival to attract local and international tourists coming to Rote has not been utilized optimally, the government of Rote-Ndao Regency should be aware of its potential danger. Economic driven management that perceives and treats intangible cultural heritage as a market commodity (including commodified festivals) is like 'chemical fertilizers, artificial stimuli that feed the plant but starve the soil' (Titon 2009a, 120). It brings economic benefits to the musicians and the communities, but then harms the music tradition itself.

¹²² As far as I know, either traditional music and dance festivals or competitions are programs from the government of Rote-Ndao Regency. One reason why there is no bottom-up music events is so much related to funding.

8.4.4.3. The Procurement of a *Meko Lalanggak Esa*, Costumes and Hats

The Office of Tourism and Culture has provided assistance for obtaining musical instruments and art accessories (costumes and *ti'i langga* hats) for music and dance studios throughout Rote. To be eligible for this assistance, each studio is required to submit a copy of its statute, which is officially registered with the Office of Tourism and Culture along with a clearly planned activities program. However, many of the music and dance studios, after receiving financial assistance, have not run any activities. Musical instruments and accessories have thus been sitting idle for years (Bako 2015a). Sadly, these programs have not been monitored by the government.

8.4.4.4. Music and Dance Workshops for Studio Managers

Since 2014, the Office of Culture and Tourism has carried out education and training activities for the managers of studios throughout the entire Regency of Rote Ndao. There are two main topics that are discussed in these workshops:

- 1) *Basics of dance composition* covers materials about understanding the arts, understanding dance, the basic properties of dance, the basic elements of dance, the function of dance, types of dance, dance movements, dance composition methods, and the process of cultivating dance works.
- 2) *Musical accompaniment for dance* includes material about dance music, the elements of dance music, musical instruments, several styles of music, music development schemes, the creative mindset, and the development of the music industry in Indonesia (Bako 2015a).

This workshop is run annually by the Office of Tourism and Culture in relation to the development of the *SKB*. The workshop speakers are mostly dance and music practitioners coming from *Taman Budaya* (Arts and Cultural Center) Kupang. This marks another attempt by

Rote-Ndao Regency to compete at either regional or national levels. This program has contributed to heightening the achievement of Rote-Ndao Regency in traditional arts competitions at both regional and national levels. Bako (February 14, 2017) gave Hesron Malelak (a *meko* instructor and the manager of *Taisamuk* Music and Dance Studio at the subdistrict of South Rote) and Jessen Pah (a dancer, choreographer and the manager of *Nusa Tua Meni* Music and Dance Studio in Rote) as examples of this success. Before joining this workshop, Malelak and his studio never made the top three groups at the Rote-Ndao Arts Festival. After joining this workshop in 2015, he was finally placed in the top three. Pah was awarded the best choreographer in the regional festival in 2016, and his music and dance studio won second prize at the same Festival.

In order to promote the art of *meko* playing and Rotenese traditional dancing to the outside world, the Office of Tourism has developed a *SKB*. Another reason for developing this *SKB* was to polish Rotenese dance and *meko* playing in order to be able to compete with other arts from across the archipelago. In creating new forms of art, fifty percent of the traditional elements are maintained, including basic movements, clothing, and musical instruments (Feoh 2015; Pah and Pah 2015).

The Office of Tourism and Culture for the Regency of Rote Ndao believes that the traditional arts need to be preserved, but that, in conjunction with festivals, the development of the traditional arts has to be oriented toward the new genre (Bako 2015a). In the *SKB*, the original *meko* music is retained, but now two or more pieces of music are strung together as a medley. Movement and dress combine the traditional elements of Rote with elements from outside of Rote.

In 2012, Fransina and Jessen Pah, the managers of *Nusa Tua Meni* Music and Dance Studio, taught traditional music and dances to their students. Although they have participated in several arts festivals at the regional level for East Nusa Tenggara, their studio has never been included in the top five. They could not compete with the music and dance studios of other areas of East Nusa Tenggara: Belu with their war dance *Likurai* and Manggarai with their *sendratari* (modern dramatic dance genre). In order to achieve competition success, Jessen developed new creations, both in dance, costumes and gong music. For example, in his production of the dance *Tempat Sirih* (Betel Container), Pah took the basic idea from the Rotenese tradition of presenting guests with a box of betel leaves, areca nuts, lime and tobacco. In choreographing this idea, Pah's dance constitutes roughly ninety percent Rotenese dance elements mixed with approximately ten percent elements adopted from modern dance, as available on YouTube.

An innovation that he brought to Rotenese traditional dances was a broadened concept of space. According to Pah (personal communication on February 9, 2017), Rotenese traditional dances tend to use restricted space and do not explore their breadth, as Balinese dances do. In regard to costumes, Pah's designs are ninety percent dominated by Rotenese traditional woven fabric, which is mostly dark, but combines this with bright colored fabric in order to make the costumes eye-catching.

In relation to the dance music accompaniment, there are three innovations introduced by Pah: 1) two or three pieces of classical *meko* music are strung together in a medley; 2) pieces of music are newly written; and 3) some dynamics are added into *meko* playing. By creating new Rotenese gong music and dances, he has enabled his studio to sit on the top five for the first time.

Rotenese musicians have identified some pros and cons regarding the emergence of *SKB*. For example, Malelak (2015a), a traditional musician from *nusak* Keka, on the one hand, worries that this genre could be a threat to the traditional arts. On the other hand, he enjoys it because it is far more appealing and exciting than the traditional one, especially the dances. Ndolu (2015), the Chairman of the Communication Forum of Indigenous People Concerned About Culture, tolerates any novelty within the *SKB* as long as its basic traditional pattern is retained.

Susana Lusi-Nggebu (2015), from Batutua Village in Southwest Rote, criticized *Nusa Tua Meni* studio for not offering their members a solid foundation in learning the traditional arts of Rote. Instead, *Nusa Tua Meni* is solely interested in developing *SKB*. Lusi-Nggebu's ultimate concern is that the outsiders might think that *SKB* is the authentic Rotenese traditional arts. Like Lusi-Nggebu, Antonia Magdalena Mooy (2016) disapproves of what has been done by *Nusa Tua Meni* Music and Dance Studio. Instead of retaining the traditional elements, the *Nusa Tua Meni* studio has incorporated more non-Rotenese traditional elements into *SKB* (Mooy 2016). The non-Rotenese traditional elements are visible, particularly in choreography, music accompaniment and outfits.

Such criticism is quite common. On the one hand, the older generations of traditional musicians criticize the younger generations for their lack of knowledge and respect for their generation. On the other hand, the older generation cannot appreciate new ideas and techniques developed by the younger generation (Schippers 2010, 47). Pah (2015) has heard some dissenting voices, particularly from those who wanted to maintain the purity of traditional elements of Rotenese arts. In answer to the criticism he received, Jessen defended himself by explaining that festival judges were demanding change. If the requests weren't heeded, most

likely the arts of Rote would not be able to compete with the arts of other regions (e.g., Flores and West Timor).

8.4.5. Media and the Music Industry

The fifth domain of Schippers that will be discussed is media and the music industry. Broadcast media, such as radio and television, are significant in music sustainability. They reach a wider audience than print media. Radio used to be a powerful media in the 1930s but, as television developed, radio's significance diminished. Television started to dominate the broadcast media, in particular from the 1950s onwards. As a powerful medium for the dissemination and promotion of endangered music traditions, television has been used successfully in promoting, for instance, *yuanshengtai min'ge* (original ecology folksong) in China (Rees 2012, 34-35 and; Gorfinkel 2012, 107-109), *ca trù*¹²³ in Vietnam (Grant 2014, 143) and traditional music and dance of Domaniç, Turkey (Gardner 2015, 79).

Over the last five or so years, the Internet has become the dominant broadcast medium. Video-sharing websites such as YouTube, Flickr and Facebook have played a significant role in promoting traditional music. For instance, the traditional music channel on YouTube has been dedicated to promoting traditional music from across the world since 2010. The significant use of the Internet in music sustainability has also been acknowledged by scholars such as Catherine Grant (2011, 109), Shelley D. Brunt and Henry Johnson (2013), and Olcay Muslu Gardner (2015).

Radio was introduced to Rote at the beginning of the 1970s. The only broadcast media in Rote is *Swara Malole* (meaning “beautiful voice”) radio station. This radio station is a private company owned by a shop owner and situated in Lekioen, Ba'a, the subdistrict of Lobalain.

¹²³ A chamber music genre of the majority people living in northern Vietnam (Grant 2014, 127)

Unfortunately, being the only radio station in Rote does not automatically make *Swara Malole* the advocate for Rotenese traditional music. Based on my fieldwork observations, most of its programs are dominated by Indonesian and Western pop music, news, quizzes and spiritual discussions, and no program is dedicated to the promotion of Rotenese traditional music.

Besides this radio station, the government of Rote-Ndao Regency has not conducted a comprehensive recording project on *sasandu* and *meko* music. *Kantor Perpustakaan Arsip Daerah dan Pengelolaan Data Elektronik* (the office of Regional Archival Library and Electronic Data Management) focuses on collecting existing publications in Rote rather than recordings. During my research on the island, I was not able to find any recordings of *sasandu* and *meko* playing either made by the government, private individuals, or commercial enterprises.

Scholars have emphasised the importance of recording as a tool for sustainability. For example, Don Niles (2004) discusses recording as a tool for teaching; Peter Toner (2003) talks about recording as a continuation of tradition; and Jill Stubington and Peter Dunbar-Hall argue for recording as a medium to learn and recollect songs and traditions from the past (Stubington and Dunbar-Hall 1994).

8.5. Summary

Although the future of *meko* music and playing is in doubt, as expressed by, for example, Lau (2015) from Toalima Village in the subdistrict of Northwest Rote, I am convinced that *meko* music and playing as Rotenese intangible cultural heritage is sustainable. A convincing statement made by Eliezer Tungga (2015) from Busalangga Urban Village is that *meko* music and playing will live as long as its traditional bearers (i.e., the Rotenese people) because it relates to Rotenese identity. *Meko* music and playing will die if it is not wanted any longer by the Rotenese (cf. Yampolsky 2001, 177).

Despite the fact that there are problems in relation to the teaching of *meko* music in schools and studios, the sharp decline in the number of accomplished *sasandu* and *meko* performers, and lack of enthusiasm among youths to learn *sasandu* and *meko* playing, there is a future for these two Rotenese musical instruments. The emergence of *SKB* can be perceived as an attempt made by local artists with the support of the government to sustain *meko* music and dance in Rote. The incorporation of new elements and the change of the social context in order to sustain the endangered musical traditions are a common practice among traditional musicians, cultural activists and ethnomusicologists around the world (e.g., Khmer, Vietnam, Myanmar, India, Iran).

Grant (2011, 104) argues that the way a community perceives and understands music in relation to its context is socially constructed. In other words, if a community changes their perception and understanding about music and its context, there is room for that music to be sustainable. For instance, since the 1950s, traditional musicians in Vietnam have been responding to the general governmental directive by creating “a new traditional music” (Nhạc dân tộc cải biên). This new genre combines Vietnamese folk music with Western harmony and instruments (Nguyễn 2008, 288). The Korean traditional musical drama *p’ansori*, which experienced sharp decline in the early twentieth century, has regained its popularity since 1964 (Grant 2012, 43) when the context was changed and new elements were added, including text, music, production and consumption of performance and agents (Um 2008, 31-32). Another example is Carnatic classical music from Madras. It is sustainable because the society allows aspects of its traditional music to change. For instance, the culture borrows from Western musical cultures regarding principles such as musical notation, the flexibility of music performance with no restrictions to certain seasons or events, and various social contexts for

performance. Although Carnatic classical music has fundamentally changed in terms of its musical life, the sound remains Indian (Nettl 1985, 42-43).

Gadamer (Gadamer, Weinsheimer, and Marshall, 282) argues that in musical traditions there are always elements of freedom and of history. Musical traditions change in response to their contemporary contexts but at the same time retain some elements from the past. Titon (2009b, 30) argues that traditional music as intangible cultural heritage constantly changes in response to inside or outside pressures. If the understanding of *meko* music and playing as a dynamic and ever-changing musical tradition is accepted by Rotenese musicians, then a fear about the sustainability of *meko* music and playing in Rote would be at least minimized.

The birth of *SKB* can be understood as a response to outside pressure, particularly in relation to competitions. The incorporation of foreign elements into *meko* music and playing, for instance the adding of dynamics and the arrangement of *gongs* in a wooden frame according to the Western keyboard arrangement, and the change of its context from social to competition and public performance, exemplifies the freedom of *SKB* to respond to the contemporary context.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

This dissertation has attempted to answer my two major research questions: 1) How are *meko* music and playing conceptualized by the Rotenese; and 2) How are *meko* music and playing sustained by the Rotenese? These two research questions arose primarily in relation to two issues that I observed during the beginning of my fieldwork research in Rote, namely: musical geography, and the sustainability of *meko* music and playing in Rote.

In order to understand the Rotenese gongs and music, I combined my research model with Rice's (1987, 480) triangular model which emphasizes three aspects: 1) historical cognition/construction; 2) social maintenance; and 3) individual creation and experience. The dyadic and triadic concepts that underlie the Rotenese organization of their world is applicable to Rice's and my models. In Rice's model (see figure 5.1.), the concepts of complementarity and superiority (the dyad), and the hierarchy (the triad) are related to the historical construction. These concepts are embedded in my research participants' minds, although not explicitly articulated through conversation or even further expressed in writings. Whereas in my research model (see figure 3.2.) these concepts are discovered in the domain of the scholarly perspective. I was introduced to these concepts after reading the dissertation of James Fox (1968), who contests the Leiden anthropologists (e.g., Jan Petrus Benjamin de Josselin de Jong, Patrick Edward de Josselin de Jong and F.A.E. van Wouden) concerning the Indonesian organization of society into the principles of unilineal descent.

The conceptualization of *meko* music and playing has been discussed sequentially in Chapters Four to Seven. Chapters Four to Six discuss the Rotenese conceptualization of *meko* as sound-producing instrument ensemble, material culture, and cultural concept. Chapter Seven discusses the conceptualization of music as a means used by the Rotenese people to emphasize

the musical geography of Eastern and Western Rote. In Chapter Eight, the sustainability of *meko* music and playing in Rote is analyzed using Schippers' (2010, 180-181) five domains: 1) systems of learning music; 2) musicians and communities; 3) contexts and constructs; 4) infrastructure and regulations; and 5) media and the music industry. Schippers' model is adopted because the five domains suggested fit well with my research context, particularly in relation to *meko* teaching and learning, and the change of attitude among the younger generation of the Rotenese toward the significance of *meko* and *sasandu* playing.

In regard to the conceptualization of *meko* instruments, music and playing, I argue that the significance of *meko* as a Rotenese symbol of identity is not represented through ornaments and actions as, for instance, found in Balinese *gamelan* (cf. Kartomi et al. 2008, 385-386). Instead, it is represented through three elements: 1) the name and the primary function of *meko*; 2) the basic character of *meko*; and 3) the number of gongs in a *meko lalanggak esa*. Therefore, it is quite common in Rote to see gongs scattered about everywhere, gong mallets spotted with stains of betel nut spit or people stepping over the instruments. Basile (1996, 5) also spotted this special attitude and discussed it in one of his publications. During his research in Rote, Basile saw one *sasandu* performer flick the ashes of his cigarette into his *sasandu's haik*, treating it as if it were an ashtray. When questioned by Basile about the reason for doing this, he responded lightly, "No big deal, when the *sasandu* wears out, we make another."

This attitude would be unacceptable to most Javanese and Balinese gong performers. In Thailand, it is obligatory for Thai traditional musicians to treat their instruments with respect. Stepping over their instruments is forbidden (Miller 2008, 124-125). In the Rotenese context, the significance of the *meko* as Rotenese symbol of identity is not apparent in the physical aspects of the instruments, such as structure or ornaments; rather the significance of *meko* lies in the name

and the primary function of *meko* itself. The word “*meko*,” meaning “to call people to gather,” denotes the primary function of this instrument, namely, to announce sad and happy news to the local community. The big sound produced by a *meko lalanggak esa* signals the whole village about an important event that is occurring. For example, the death of a member of the village was announced by the *meko*. The smallest *meko* (the *meko ana dae*) proclaimed the death of a child, whereas the largest *meko* (the *meko ina makamu*) proclaimed the death of an adult. These functions cannot be substituted by the *sasandu* (a heterochord tube zither instrument), which is individualistic in nature.

In the context of Rotenese agricultural society, collectivism predominates over individualism. For instance, controlling the flow of water in and out of the rice fields (the irrigation management or known as *subak* in Bali) is a complex network that involves individuals and family groups. Only good cooperation among these farmers will guarantee the success of this collective work.

Meko playing is a musical representation of Rotenese agricultural society. For instance, “the importance of debt as a determinant of social obligation”¹²⁴ (Reid 1993, 6) is apparent through the use of interlocking technique in *meko* playing, while the “rice-pounding rhythm” is clearly captured in the playing of *meko ana*. Therefore, *meko* playing is not merely music playing but reflects the cultural tradition from which it belongs. *Meko* playing has social and spiritual dimensions as well. Socially, playing *meko* is a shared remembrance of togetherness,

¹²⁴ “Debt” refers to the social bond. It grows when two or more people trade services. Finally, the bond becomes permanent so none of them will be able to recognize how much they owe one to another (Spiller 2004, 14-15). In the context of Rotenese agricultural society, the social bond grows as a result of the act of giving and receiving. For instance, providing services during the planting and harvesting seasons, or the building of a house. This social bond will create mutual reciprocal relationships between the people involved.

especially after completing a big job. Spiritually, it is a call for the Rotenese to show empathy toward those economically less fortunate.

The number of gongs in a *meko lalanggak esa* emphasizes the superiority of this instrument to its counterpart, the *sasandu*. *Sio* (nine) is a symbol of perfection, continuity and sustainability. *Sio* is a reference to the perfection of man-made musical instruments, as well as an allusion to the continuity and sustainability of Rotenese culture. *Meko* is an affirmation of the future. Tungga's (2015) strong confidence about the future of *meko* playing confirms this.

As previously mentioned, Rotenese people from eastern Rote identify themselves as distinct from those coming from western Rote. *Meko* music and playing has been used by these two groups of people to draw a musical border. Through music, the social and geographical differences of these two territories are emphasized. In comparing the transcribed recordings of three selected *li* played by four *meko* ensembles representing the eastern and the western parts of Rote, my musical analyses show that there are more similarities than differences between them. My research results challenge the musical geography division of the eastern and western parts of Rote.

I observed that the differences between these musical ensembles do not lie in their musical elements (e.g., rhythms, tempo, the order of *meko* playing), rather in their tunings. Differences in tunings are a result of: 1) the procurement of these four *meko* ensembles;¹²⁵ and 2) the storage of these ensembles. Even if these four *meko* ensembles played similar rhythmic patterns, the sound would be completely different.

Finally, in regard to the sustainability of Rotenese *meko* music and playing, the emergence of *Seni Kreasi Baru* can be perceived as an attempt made by some Rotenese musicians to sustain

¹²⁵ These four *meko* ensembles were obtained from different music providers.

this musical tradition. Although *SKB* has been criticized by some as not representing Rotenese traditional music and dance (Ledoh 2015b; Lusi-Nggebu 2015; Mooy 2016; Malelak 2015b), it truly exemplifies the dynamic and ever-changing aspects of music traditions (e.g., Merriam 1964, 303; Berreman 1968, 338; Blacking 1977, 17; Taruskin 1995, 182). *SKB* can be perceived as a response to changes in the context of traditional music performance, namely, from social and ritual contexts to competitions.

Nettl (2005, 278-280) classifies four levels of change: 1) complete change, for instance, the adoption of Christianity by the Venda people (Blacking 1977) or the adoption of Charismatic denomination in Keka and Talae Villages in Rote in the late 1960s; 2) radical change, for instance, the adoption of Western musical instruments into Burmese traditional music (Keeler 2008); 3) gradual/normal change, for instance, the adoption of girls' and boys' schools and possession dance cults from their neighbors (Blacking 1971); and 4) allowable variation, for instance, the variation of Javanese gongs' tuning (Lindsay 1992).

In the complete kind of change, the traditional culture bearers abandon their own tradition for another. In the radical change, the new form of the tradition can still be traced back to the old. In the gradual or normal change, there is continuity and change within the tradition. Finally, allowable variation is more related to the acceptable practice among traditional musicians *vis-à-vis* individual variation.

Following this classification of change, *SKB* can be categorized into the third level, namely, gradual or normal change. Although there have been some changes within this tradition (e.g., the adding of dynamics, the arrangement of gongs following the Western keyboard system, the medley arrangements, the change of context etc), the musical style and the sound of *SKB* as

an evolving genre remain Rotenese. Borrowing Spiller's (2004, 265) words, "*SKB* is traditional in the sense that it is the ever-shifting summation of the past reconfigured for the present."

Concerning the sustainability of Rotenese *meko*, there are at least two approaches that could be done by the Rote-Ndao Regency, i.e., documentation and preservation; and transmission and dissemination. These two approaches are adopted from 5 approaches to music sustainability identified by Catherine Grant's (2014)(i.e., documentation and preservation; recognition and celebration; transmission and dissemination; policy and enterprise; and coordinating and evaluating mechanism).

Regarding documentation and preservation, the Rote-Ndao government can learn from three high-profile Australian collecting institutions: 1) the Return of Materials to Indigenous Materials to Communities (ROMTIC) initiated by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS); 2) the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures (PARADISEC); and 3) the National Recording Project for Indigenous Performance in Australia (Treloyn and Emberly 2013, 160). For example, the NRPIPA in cooperation with local indigenous communities records traditional music, dance and ceremony; it returns archival records of music, dance and ceremony to indigenous communities; it publishes books and albums of traditional music and dance under the indigenous music label; it assists communities to use these recordings for wider purposes, for instance: 1) for teaching (Corn 2013, 271; Niles 2004); 2) as a continuation of tradition (Toner 2003); and 3) as a medium to learn and recollect songs and traditions from the past (Stubington and Dunbar-Hall 1994). In relation to transmission and dissemination, the Rote-Ndao Government might think of the possibility of creating an online resource for teaching and learning in the future, but it should be

done considerably. How accessible and affordable is the tool to the Rotenese community should become the primary concern of the government.

The interactive gamelan created by the University of Otago might become a good example for this. In 2010-2010, a team of researchers and information technology staff from Otago University in collaboration with Joko Susilo, a gamelan performer from Otago University, created a web-based interactive music resource called iGamelan (Brunt and Johnson 2013, 221). This tool is created with two primary aims: 1) to facilitate and support learning process; and 2) to convey the musical practice and approach from the insider's perspective (Brunt and Johnson 2013, 222). *iMeko* would bring several benefits both to the Rotenese and the Indonesians as a whole, e.g., *meko* learning can happen anywhere and anytime; *meko* learning can be done individually or in groups; learning tools are portable; and users can learn *meko* playing and at the same time create new music.

During my research, I observed some research gaps to fill in. For instance, according to Basile (1998b, 800), *meko ina* (three gongs), *meko nggasa* (two gongs) and *meko leko* (two gongs) are each played by one performer, whereas *meko ana* consisting of two gongs are divided among two performers. Whereas in my ethnographic observation on Rote, the *meko ana laik* and *daek* are usually played by one performer but the *meko leko* is divided among two performers (e.g., *Li Te'o Tonak*, *Li Mudipapa* and *Batu Matia*). These differences create a research gap. If both of us are correct, then there has been a significant change from Basile's time to the time of my fieldwork on Rote. The questions to answer, therefore, are: when, why and how did these changes happen?

Other research gaps to fill are: 1) the composing and the history of new gong music pieces (*li*) (e.g., *Li Benta Taon*, *Li Koa Dau-dau*, *Li Dede Kode*, *Li Foa Balaha* and *Li Toru Matetun*);

2) the utilizing of new gong music pieces as a vehicle for criticism; and 3) the ornamentation in *meko* music and playing. These limitations create opportunities for future ethnomusicological research on Rotenese gong music.

Thank you!

Makasih nae-nae!

Makasih no'uk!

Makasih dodo'uk!

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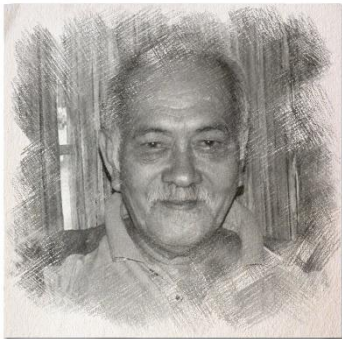
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Appendix one – The Profiles of the Research Participants

The Research Participant's Name	The Participant's Address	The Participant's Profile
Bako, Meri Rosalin	Mokdale Urban Village, the subdistrict of Lobalain	Bako is the head of the Dance, Culture and History division at the Office of Culture and Tourism of the Rote Ndao Regency.
Dama, Meysias	Lekioen Urban Village, the subdistrict of Lobalain	Dama is the head of the Management Studies Program at the University of Nusa Lontar. A <i>meko</i> and <i>tambur</i> performer who was born in Eahun, the subdistrict of East Rote.
Dami, Gabriel	Ba'adale Village, the subdistrict of Lobalain	Dami was a former employee of the Ba'a Office of Education and the manager of Penapua Music and Dance Studio.
	Tebole Village, the subdistrict of South Rote	Dethan was born on August 28, 1944 in Seda, Pilasue Village, the subdistrict of South Rote. He is a farmer as well as a chanter. In addition, Dethan also teaches gong playing at the SDN Inpres elementary school in Pilasue.
Dethan, Yosias		
Faah, Nehemia	Leki <i>Kampong</i> , Olafuliha'a Urban Village, the subdistrict of Pantai Baru	Faah was born in Landu on November 4, 1941. He finished his secondary teacher training (SGA) in 1964 and began teaching at the public elementary school (SDN) in Lidor in Mei 1965. From 1971 to 1973 he taught at SD GMIT Talaemok, and then from 1973 to 1975 he taught at SD GMIT Olafulihaa. Before becoming a cultural supervisor, Nehemia Faah taught from 1975 –

1979 at SD Inpres Lelebe. He was appointed a cultural supervisor at the Office of Youth and Sports in the subdistrict of Central Rote from 1979 until his retirement in 2001. Faah is on the management board of *leo* Tananggoe in the village unit of Olafuliha'a and tribal chief of Ma Li in the subdistrict of Landu Leko.



Fanggidae, Yeri Y.

Onatali Urban Village, the subdistrict of Central Rote

Fanggidae was born on March 26, 1975 in Leli *Kampong*, Onatali Urban Village. He received his theological degree from STT Paulus in Jakarta and became a Bethel Church of Indonesia (GBI) minister for the Leli congregation. At the same time, Fanggidae was appointed as the Ingufao tribal chief. Ingufao is one of the kingdoms that was not acknowledged by The Netherlands. He became a chanter as well as a young Rotenese cultural observer

Feoh, Johanis

Busalangga Urban Village, the subdistrict of Northwest Rote

Feoh was the head of the Regional Arts Development Division of Rote Ndao's Office of Education and Culture (2002-2005); the Head of the Division of Cultural Lore (*Pesona Budaya*) at the Office of Tourism for the Regency of Rote Ndao (2010-2011); the Head of the subdistrict of Northwest Rote (2014-2019)

Haning, Paul Anselmus

W.J. Lalamentik 47
Fatululi Urban Village, the subdistrict of Oebobo, the City of Kupang

Haning was born in Thie on July 28, 1936. He graduated from *Sekolah Guru Bawah* (Teacher's Training School) in Kupang in 1957. He taught as an elementary teacher in Tudamedia, and continued at Lidamanu Rote. Then he moved to Kupang and taught at the elementary school in



Henukh, Paulus

Poncoronaka No. 42 RT
06/RW II, Kuanino Urban
Village, the City of
Kupang

Oebobo I until he retired. Paul
Haning established Sanggar Tari
dan Musik Rote (Rote Dance and
Music) *Sasandu* in 1986 with
Adrianus Ani as instructor.

Henukh was born in the Bali Oli
neighborhood of Oebela Village,
in the subdistrict of Northwest
Rote on November 15, 1958.

Henukh works as an entrepreneur
and the manager of the Rote
Music and Dance Studio *Sue Lai*
(affection).



Lau, Frans

Toalima Village, the
subdistrict of Northwest
Rote

Lau finished his education at the
Primary Teacher Training School
in 1958 and then attended a
Teacher Training Course in Rote
in 1970. He began teaching at the
public elementary school (SDN)
Aduoen, Boni Village in 1958.
Then he moved to the public
elementary school (SDN) Ndaui in
1961 and became the principal of
the Hundihuk Public Elementary
School, Netenaen Village (1974-
1978). From 1982 he became a
supervisor for Community
Assistance for Youth and Sports.
Then he became a member of the
House of Representatives,
Kupang Regency, for two
consecutive periods (1982-1987,
and 1987-1992). After that he
again became a supervisor for
Community Assistance for Youth
and Sports from 1992-1998. Lau
is a Lulu tribal chief (*manaleo*).



Ledoh, Elias

Faeanak, Temas Village,
the subdistrict of
Northwest Rote

Ledoh was born in Faeanak on 3 April 1939. He was the head of Temas Village from 1978 until 1989. He works as a farmer.



Ledoh, Herman

Busalangga Urban Village,
the subdistrict of
Northwest Rote

Herman Ledoh comes from the village of Temas. He has three brothers and two sisters. His father and grandfather were renowned iron craftsmen in the regency of Rote Ndao. Before becoming a *sasandu* and gong maker, Herman Ledoh worked as a photographer.



Lusi-Nggebu, Susana

Batutua Village, the
subdistrict of Southwest
Rote

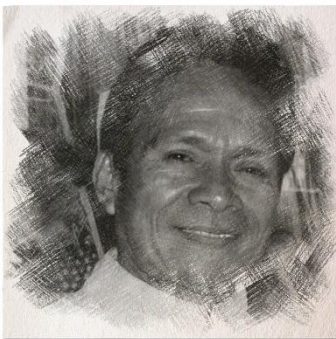
Lusi-Nggebu was born in the Village of Batutua on October 21, 1968. She is the manager of the music and dance studio *Samusio*, meaning “to have nine roots.” Susana obtained her bachelor’s degree in History at the University of Nusa Lontar in 2013. She began by teaching at the public junior high school 1 (SMPN 1) in Batutua (2004 – 2009) before requesting to be transferred to the elementary school *SD Inpres* in Batutua from 2010 until the current time. Susana is the niece of the well-known traditional musician of Rote, Yusuf Nggebu.



Malelak, Hesron

Nggelodae Village, the subdistrict of South Rote

Malelak was born in Nggelak, Nggelodae Village on January 30, 1948. He was a teacher of art and culture at the SMPN 1 Oele from 1987 – 2011 and at SMPN 5 Lobalain from 2011 to the present. Hesron is the manager of the Rote traditional music and dance studio *Taisamuk* (remaining shoots and hope for life).



Mesah, Yusuf

Meoain Village, the subdistrict of Southwest Rote

Mesah was born in Meoain Village on 17 April 1957. He became a civil servant beginning in 1981 and assigned as an operational staff member for the Supplies Division for the Regional Office of Education and Culture in the city of Kupang (1981 – 1986). From 1986 until 2004 he worked in the office of the subdistrict of Southwest in Batutua Village. In 1996 he was appointed as a cultural supervisor in the subdistrict of Southwest Rote. From 2004 to 2007 he was brought back to the regency to the organization section (especially in the organization department). On July 11, 2008 he was designated as an Echelon III civil servant and appointed the Head of the Division of Village Government and Community Empowerment in the Regency of Rote Ndao. A year later he was moved to the Office of Population and Family Planning for the Regency of Rote Ndao for six months before being appointed Head of the Division of Promotion at the Office of Culture and Tourism of Rote Ndao. Mesah is the manager of the music and dance studio *Deta Hitu*.



Mooy, Antonia Magdalena

Namodale Urban Village,
the subdistrict of Lobalain

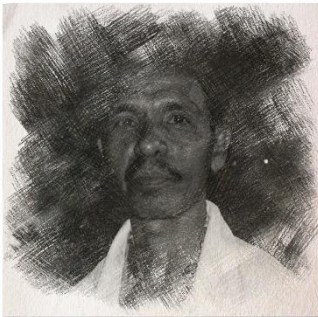
Mooy was born in Letelangga neighborhood, Namodale Urban Village in the subdistrict of Lobalain on May 19, 1966. She teaches at SD Inpres 2 elementary school in Ba'a. Mooy was the student of the late Yusuf Nggebu.



Mooy, Jonas

Oebou Village, the
subdistrict of Southwest
Rote

Mooy was born on July 11, 1948. He was the manager of the music and dance studio *Ndolu Ingg* (peace that surrounds the village); *manahelo*; gong instructor and *sasandu* at the *Batulei* (writing stone) studio SDN Andoheo (every Wednesday), SDN Landu (every Friday), and *Samusio* studio (nine fibres) SMPN 1 Batu Tua (every Saturday. Mooy is a dry field farmer.



Nalle, Esau

Oenitas Village, the
subdistrict of West Rote

Nalle was born in Danggoen neighborhood of Dolasi Village, the subdistrict of Southwest Rote on January 10, 1967. He is a teacher at the Oenitas elementary school (*SD Inpres Oenitas*) and manager of the music and dance studio *Deta Manu*, meaning "a hen nurturing her chicks." This studio was established in 2005

Ndolu, Yohanis B.

Mokdale Urban Village,
the subdistrict of Lobalain

Ndolu is the tribal chief (*maneleo Kunak*) by four tribes: Felama, Taililo, Nggi, and Faisama on 3 Juli 2003. Appointed as the Chairman of the Communication Forum of Indigenous People Concerned about Culture on 6 July 2011. Received the *Kick Andy Heroes Award* in 2011 and the *Ashoka Global Entrepreneur Award* from the United States the same year. In 2011 he was also

Pah, Fransina and Jefri
Niksen Pah

Mokdale Urban Village,
the subdistrict of Lobalain

awarded the *Anugrah Peduli Pendidikan (APP)* from the Ministry of Education and Culture for services promoting education in Rote Ndau. In 2012 he received an award from the East Nusa Tenggara Academic Awards (Forum Akademia NTT).

Owner of the music and dance studio *Nusa Tua Meni* (Fragrant Lontar Island). Jefri Nicksen (Jessen) is the sixth child of Fransina Pah. Jessen is the dance choreographer and gong instructor at this studio, while Fransina is a *manahelo*, dancer and gong performer who hails from the village of Boni, Lailete, The subdistrict of Northwest Rote.



Pellando'u, Eduard

Onatali Urban Village, the
subdistrict of Central Rote

Pellando'u was born in the remote Village of Namodale, Onatali Urban Village, the subdistrict of Central Rote on February 14, 1962. He received his Law degree in 2010 from Artha Wacana Christian University, Kupang, which had conducted a long distance learning program in Rote. He has been a government employee since 1 February 1986 at the Office of the Department of Education in the subdistrict of Central Rote. Pellando'u is also manager of the Rote traditional music and dance studio *Libutio*, which means "to get together, agree with each other, and work." This studio was established in 2013 and routinely holds practices on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays from 16:00 on at Eduard's residence. Most of the participants are primary and junior high school students



Penu, Lefinus

Lakamola Village, the subdistrict of East Rote

Born on 13 March 1949 in the village of Lakamola. He is a *maneleo* of Kai Oe, *manahelo*, and a farmer.



Ruy, Anderias

Londalusi Urban Village, the subdistrict of East Rote

Ruy was born in Londalusi Urban Village on August 30, 1949. Ruy is a farmer, a *manahelo*, and a *maneleo*.



Selly, Daud

Faeanak, Temas Village, the subdistrict of Northwest Rote

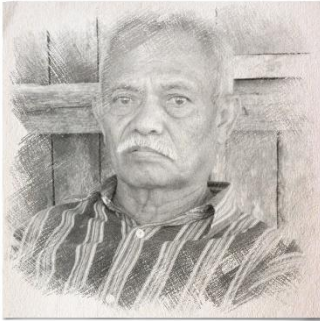
Born on 14 January 1942 di Temas Village and resides in the village of Faianak RT 03/RW 02, Temas. He is a *manaleo*, head of government affairs for the village of Temas, Northwest Rote subdistrict, and also elder/presbyter of the Assembly of God Church in Temas Village.



Sjioen, Pieter

Faifua Village, the subdistrict of East Rote

Born in Bilba on 18 Juli 1952. He is a former teacher at Kuanino Primary School, East Kupang (1977), Batuidu Primary School (1977 – 1986), Oesosole Public Primary School (1986 – 1996), Principal of the Dau Rendale Public Primary School (Landu Leko, 1996 - 2000), Principal of Oesosole Public Primary School (2000 – 2001), and head of the Branch Office of Education for the subdistrict of East Rote (2001 – 2008)



Sodak, Onasias

Onatali Urban Village, the subdistrict of Central Rote

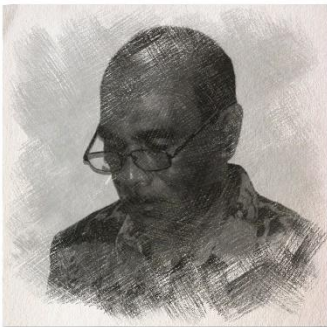
Sodak was born on Oktober 13, 1939 in the Feapopi neighborhood, Onatali Urban Village, in the subdistrict of Central Rote. He served as a member of the Indonesian army from 1959-1969 and is currently a farmer.



Therik, Reinert Eduard

Matanae Village, the subdistrict of East Rote

Born on 16 Agustus 1941 in the kingdom (*nusak*) of Ringgou. He was formerly a primary school teacher in Batuidu, SDN Pepela, SD GMIT Fa'a, SD Inpres Eahun, and principal of SDN Sotimori, Supervisor of the kindergarten/primary school, and Head of the Branch office of Education in the subdistrict of East Rote, Regency of Rote Ndao.



Theedens, Djony

Naikoten I, the City of Kupang

A violin *sasandu* musician and government civil servant at the Office of Tourism and Culture, Province of NTT, in Kupang.



Thonak, Anderias

Ba'adale Village, the subdistrict of Lobalain

Thonak was born in Ba'adale Village on August 17, 1966. He works as a farmer.



Tunga, Godlief Eliasar

Busalangga Urban Village, the subdistrict of Northwest Rote

Tunga was born in Busalangga Urban Village in the subdistrict of Northwest Rote on June 26, 1936. He is a public figure, a farmer, and also the tribal chief of Henutein.



Tuy, Chornelis

Daleholu Village, the subdistrict of South Rote

Tuy was born on March 17, 1964 in Oele, Daleholu Village, the subdistrict of South Rote. Tuy is the tribal chief of *Fetor* and a farmer/cultivator

Li Kakamusu

(Recorded at Desa Temas on February 13, 2015)

♩ = 160

Transcription by R.A. Swastedi and Agastya Rama Listya

Meko nggasa

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa



Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

14

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

17

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

19

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

21

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

24

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

26

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

Musical score for measures 26-27. The score features five staves: *Meko ana* (treble clef), *Meko leko* (treble clef), *Meko nggasa* (treble clef), *Meko ina* (bass clef), and *Tambur* (percussion). *Meko ana* and *Meko leko* play a melody of eighth notes with rests. *Meko nggasa* plays a pattern of eighth notes with rests. *Meko ina* plays a bass line with eighth notes and rests. *Tambur* plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.

28

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

Musical score for measures 28-29. The score features five staves: *Meko ana* (treble clef), *Meko leko* (treble clef), *Meko nggasa* (treble clef), *Meko ina* (bass clef), and *Tambur* (percussion). *Meko ana* and *Meko leko* play a melody of eighth notes with rests. *Meko nggasa* plays a pattern of eighth notes with rests. *Meko ina* plays a bass line with eighth notes and rests. *Tambur* plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.

30

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

The musical score is written for five instruments. The first four are vocal or melodic instruments (Meko ana, Meko leko, Meko nggasa, Meko ina) and the fifth is a percussion instrument (Tambur). The score is for a 30-measure piece. The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals. The Tambur part is written on a single line with a double bar line at the beginning and end, indicating it is a percussion instrument.

Li Kakamusu

(Recorded in Kampung Eahun on March 1, 2015)

$\text{♩} = 125$

Transcription by R.A. Swastedi and Agastya Rama Listya

Meko nggasa

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

10

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

13

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

15

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

17

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

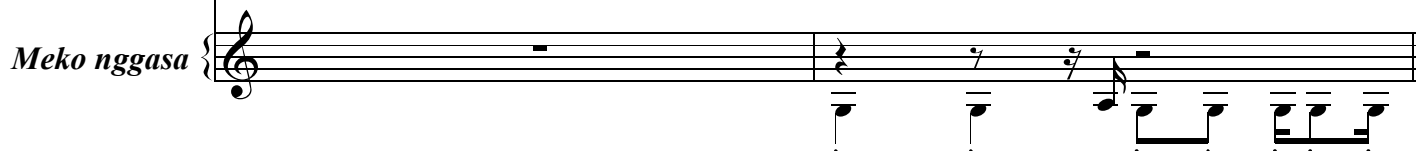
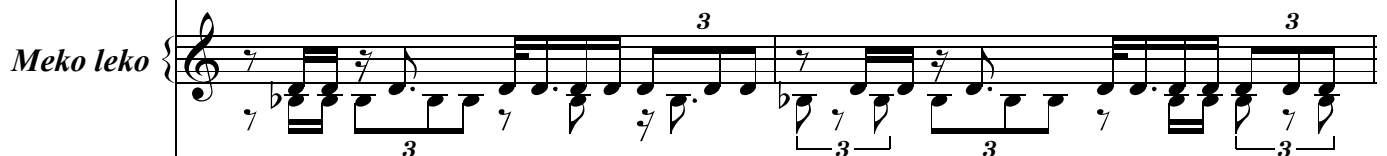
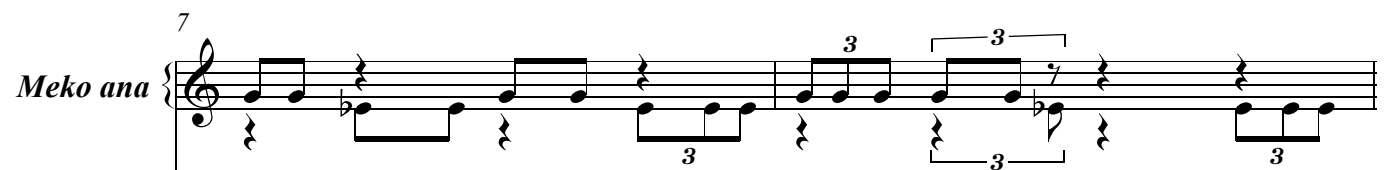
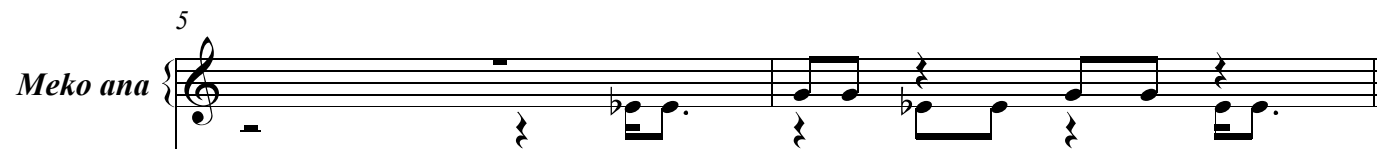
Tambur

Li Mudipapa

(Recorded at Desa Temas on February 13, 2015)

♩ = 74

Transcription by R.A. Swastedi and Agastya Rama Listya



9

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

13

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Measure 13: *Meko ana* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko leko* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko nggasa* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko ina* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes.

Measure 14: *Meko ana* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko leko* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko nggasa* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko ina* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes.

14

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Measure 14: *Meko ana* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko leko* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko nggasa* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko ina* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes.

Measure 15: *Meko ana* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko leko* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko nggasa* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko ina* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes.

16

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Measure 16: *Meko ana* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko leko* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko nggasa* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko ina* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes.

17

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

Measure 17: *Meko ana* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko leko* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko nggasa* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko ina* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Tambur* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes.

Measure 18: *Meko ana* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko leko* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko nggasa* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Meko ina* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes. *Tambur* has a triplet of eighth notes, a triplet of eighth notes, and a triplet of eighth notes.

19

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

21

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

22

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur



23

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur



Roroke (Li Mudipapa)

(Recorded at Eahun Kampong on March 1, 2015)

♩ = 83

Transcription by R.A. Swastedi and Agastya Rama Listya

Meko leko

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

9

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

10

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

This system contains measures 1 through 11 of the musical piece. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, rests, and various rhythmic values. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 3 and 6 above or below notes. The staves are labeled *Meko ana*, *Meko leko*, *Meko nggasa*, and *Meko ina* from top to bottom.

12

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

This system contains measures 12 through 15. Measure 12 is marked with a blue '12' and a blue square icon. The notation continues with the same four-staff format. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 6, 3, and 6. The staves are labeled *Meko ana*, *Meko leko*, *Meko nggasa*, and *Meko ina* from top to bottom.

13

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

13

15

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

15

16

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

17

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

18

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

19

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is written for five instruments: Meko ana, Meko leko, Meko nggasa, Meko ina, and Tambur. It is divided into two systems, 18 and 19. System 18 (measures 18-22) shows Meko ana with a 6-measure rest and a 6-measure phrase; Meko leko with a 6-measure phrase and a 6-measure phrase; Meko nggasa with a 6-measure phrase and a 6-measure phrase; Meko ina with a 6-measure phrase and a 6-measure phrase; and Tambur with a 6-measure phrase. System 19 (measures 23-27) shows Meko ana with a 6-measure phrase and a 3-measure phrase; Meko leko with a 6-measure phrase and a 6-measure phrase; Meko nggasa with a 6-measure phrase and a 6-measure phrase; Meko ina with a 6-measure phrase and a 6-measure phrase; and Tambur with a 3-measure phrase and a 6-measure phrase.

20

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

21

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

22

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

23

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

Li Tai Benu

(Recorded at Temas Village on February 13, 2015)

♩ = 110

Transcription by R.A. Swastedi and Agastya Rama Listya



9

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

13

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

15

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

17

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

19

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

21

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

23

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

25

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

The musical score is written for five instruments: Meko ana, Meko leko, Meko nggasa, Meko ina, and Tambur. The score is in 2/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat). Meko ana and Meko leko are in treble clef, while Meko ina is in bass clef. Tambur is in a simplified notation. The score consists of two measures. Meko ana plays a melody of eighth and sixteenth notes. Meko leko plays a similar melody with some rests. Meko nggasa plays a complex pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with many rests. Meko ina plays a melody of eighth and sixteenth notes. Tambur plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with accents.

Li Tai Benu

(Recorded at Eahun Kampong on March 01, 2015)

$\text{♩} = 110$

Transcription by R.A. Swastedi and Agastya Rama Listya

Meko ana

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

11

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

13

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

15

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

The musical score is presented in three systems. Each system contains four staves, one for each voice part: Meko ana (treble clef), Meko leko (treble clef), Meko nggasa (treble clef), and Meko ina (bass clef). The first system starts at measure 11, the second at measure 13, and the third at measure 15. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and triplets. The Meko ina part in the third system features red dots under the notes.

17

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

Measures 17-18. The score features five staves. *Meko ana* (treble clef) plays quarter notes with rests. *Meko leko* (treble clef) plays eighth notes with triplets. *Meko nggasa* (treble clef) plays eighth notes with triplets. *Meko ina* (bass clef) plays eighth notes. *Tambur* (percussion line) has a single note at the end of the measure.

19

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

Measures 19-20. The score features five staves. *Meko ana* (treble clef) plays quarter notes with rests. *Meko leko* (treble clef) plays eighth notes with triplets. *Meko nggasa* (treble clef) plays eighth notes with triplets. *Meko ina* (bass clef) plays eighth notes. *Tambur* (percussion line) plays eighth notes.

21

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

22

23

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

24

25

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

Musical score for measures 25-26. The score is for five parts: Meko ana (treble clef), Meko leko (treble clef), Meko nggasa (treble clef), Meko ina (bass clef), and Tambur (percussion). Meko ana has a melody with eighth notes and rests. Meko leko has a melody with eighth notes and rests, including triplets. Meko nggasa has a melody with eighth notes and rests. Meko ina has a bass line with eighth notes and rests. Tambur has a percussion line with eighth notes and rests.

27

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

Musical score for measures 27-28. The score is for five parts: Meko ana (treble clef), Meko leko (treble clef), Meko nggasa (treble clef), Meko ina (bass clef), and Tambur (percussion). Meko ana has a melody with eighth notes and rests. Meko leko has a melody with eighth notes and rests, including triplets. Meko nggasa has a melody with eighth notes and rests. Meko ina has a bass line with eighth notes and rests. Tambur has a percussion line with eighth notes and rests.

29

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

Measures 29-30. The score features five staves: *Meko ana* (treble clef), *Meko leko* (treble clef), *Meko nggasa* (treble clef), *Meko ina* (bass clef), and *Tambur* (percussion). *Meko ana* and *Meko leko* have triplet markings. *Meko ina* has red dots under the notes. *Tambur* has a double bar line at the end of the measure.

31

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

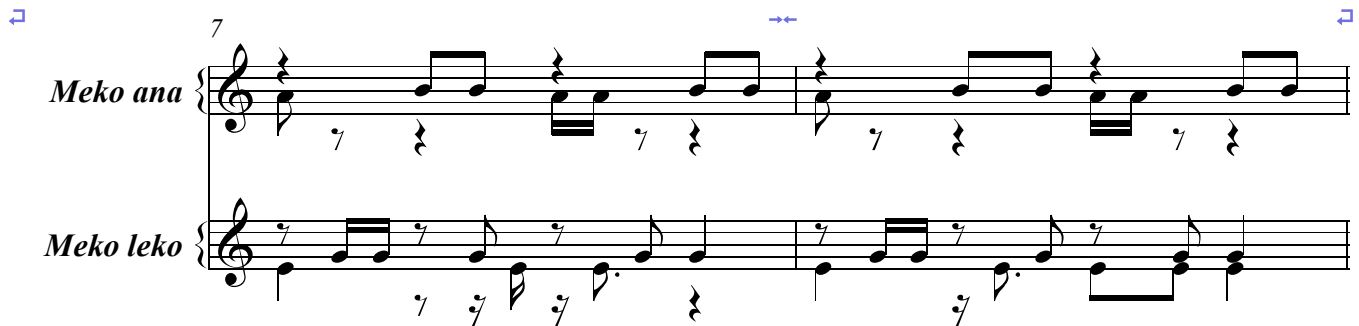
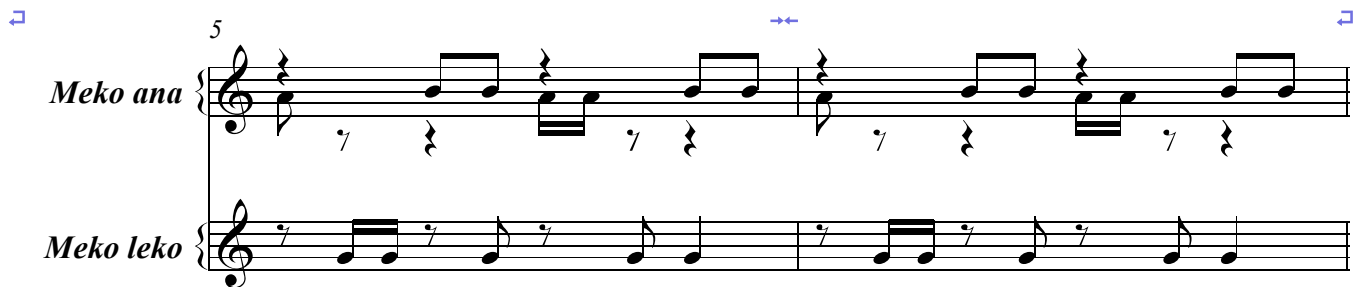
Measures 31-32. The score features five staves: *Meko ana* (treble clef), *Meko leko* (treble clef), *Meko nggasa* (treble clef), *Meko ina* (bass clef), and *Tambur* (percussion). *Meko ana* and *Meko leko* have triplet markings. *Meko ina* has red dots under the notes. *Tambur* has a double bar line at the end of the measure.

Li Tai Benu

(Recorded at Oenitas Village on November 24, 2015)

♩ = 110

Transcription by R.A. Swastedi and Agastya Rama Listya



Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa



13

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina



15

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina





17

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

19

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

21

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

23

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur



25

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

27

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

29

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

Musical score for measures 29-30. The score is for five parts: Meko ana, Meko leko, Meko nggasa, Meko ina, and Tambur. Meko ana and Meko leko are in treble clef, Meko ina is in bass clef, and Tambur is in a single-line staff. Meko nggasa is in treble clef. The music features various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and triplets. The Tambur part has accents over certain notes.

31

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

Musical score for measures 31-32. The score is for five parts: Meko ana, Meko leko, Meko nggasa, Meko ina, and Tambur. Meko ana and Meko leko are in treble clef, Meko ina is in bass clef, and Tambur is in a single-line staff. Meko nggasa is in treble clef. The music continues with similar rhythmic patterns to the previous system, including eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and triplets. The Tambur part has accents over certain notes.



33

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

35

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

Li Tai Benu

(Recorded at Sanggar Nusa Tua Meni on February 23, 2015)

$\text{♩} = 120$

Transcription by R.A. Swastedi and Agastya Rama Listya

f

Meko anak

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

7 $\rightarrow fff$

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

9 $\rightarrow f$

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

11

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

13

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

fff

15

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

17

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

f

19

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

22 *fff*

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

24 *f*

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

27 *fff*

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

29

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

Musical score for measures 29-30. The score is for five parts: Meko ana, Meko leko, Meko nggasa, Meko ina, and Tambur. Meko ana is in treble clef, Meko leko and Meko nggasa are in treble clef, Meko ina is in bass clef, and Tambur is in a simplified notation. The music features various rhythmic patterns, including triplets and accents.

30 *f*

Meko ana

Meko leko

Meko nggasa

Meko ina

Tambur

Musical score for measures 31-32. The score is for five parts: Meko ana, Meko leko, Meko nggasa, Meko ina, and Tambur. Meko ana is in treble clef, Meko leko and Meko nggasa are in treble clef, Meko ina is in bass clef, and Tambur is in a simplified notation. The music features various rhythmic patterns, including triplets and accents.